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How to teach a Sunday-school
lesson

How to Teach a Sunday-School Lesson

By
H. E. CARMACK



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TO HAROLD AND ROBERT:

We have had many walks and talks together, not the least delightful being those on the way to Sunday-school every Sunday morning since you were old enough to walk. In memory of these good times, I dedicate this little book to you, and knowing that you would never forgive me if I failed to do so, I also join with you in this dedication the member of the Home Department who, as we three are agreed, is the best little woman in the world and whom I call Wife and you call Mother.

YOUR FATHER.

Preface

THIS book is another attempt to apply the principles of psychology and pedagogy to the work of Sunday-school teaching. As so many excellent manuals have already appeared on the subject, a word of explanation and perhaps of apology is due as to why the author ventures into this field. He began his work as a Sunday-school teacher, as so many other teachers have begun, without any previous training, and has acquired his knowledge through a long and trying experience in the actual work of the Sunday-school. This, together with many years of active service in the organized work of the Sunday-school, in teachers' meetings, institutes and conventions, has given him, he feels, an understanding of the needs of the average Sunday-school teacher. Especially does he sympathize with those teachers, by far the greater number engaged in the work, who have had

no psychological or pedagogical training. In studying many of the books that have been written on this subject, he has often found that there was a gap between the theory as laid down in the book and the teaching of a lesson, a gap easily crossed perhaps by the expert, but too wide and too difficult for the average teacher. It has been his desire to write a book which the teacher can use as a guide in the preparation of each lesson, to give a lesson plan that is thoroughly scientific and to explain each step so plainly and so simply, and with such abundance of illustration, that any teacher can follow it.

If this book, therefore, has any value distinct from other books on the same subject, the writer believes that it lies in the point of view from which it has been written, that of one who has himself travelled the hard and difficult road. To help those who follow over the difficulties, to save them from the mistakes, the discouragements and the failures which he knows so well, and to help them to know the joy of skillful and success-

ful effort which he has also tasted : for this he has written this little book. If it shall, even in a small way, accomplish its object he will be well content.

For convenience the author has, all through the book, used the masculine pronoun in referring to the pupil, and the feminine pronoun for the teacher.

The author's indebtedness to others who have preceded him will be apparent. He wishes especially to acknowledge the help he has received from Prof. Charles McMurry's "Method of the Recitation," a book that should be in the hands of every Sunday-school teacher.

H. E. C.

Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania.

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I

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER'S AIM

IN order to teach a Sunday-school lesson well, the teacher must have in mind a clear and well-defined aim. The writer once playfully asked a young lady friend of his to discharge a revolver. She took the weapon gingerly in her fingers, held it out at arm's length, closed her eyes, and pulled the trigger. A good deal of Sunday-school teaching is done pretty much in the same way. The results are such as must be expected from such a haphazard way of proceeding. Contrast with this the aim of those chosen men of the tribe of Benjamin, seven hundred of them, every one of whom knew so well how to use the sling.¹ These men had learned to fix their eyes on the object they wished to hit, and to keep them there until

Importance
of an Aim

¹ Judges xx. 16.

the stone from the sling went straight to its mark. Thus by keeping the object clearly in view, and by repeated efforts, they acquired that wonderful skill which is so graphically described as "throwing at an hair's breadth and not miss." When our Sunday-school teachers, in the preparation of their lessons, and when they take their places before their classes, learn to keep in mind just what they propose to accomplish, we will have far more effective teaching in our Sunday-schools.

The purpose of the Sunday-school has been given thus: "To bring the pupil to Christ, to build him up in Christ, and to send him forth to work for Christ."

Purpose of the
Sunday-School

This is a good definition of the general purpose of the Sunday-school but it is too broad to be of much help in the teaching of a particular lesson. It is well to distinguish between what the teacher seeks to do, and what the pupil is to do as a result of the teaching. What the teacher seeks to do is one thing, what the results of that teaching may be in the life of the pupil is quite another

thing. As a matter of fact the teacher does not bring the pupil to Christ. If he comes he must do so of his own free will and choice. The teacher does not build the pupil up in Christ. He grows towards the Christlike character by daily and hourly choices in right living. The teacher does not send him forth to work for Christ. The life of service must also be entered upon by him out of love for Christ, and a desire to do His will in the world. But there is something that must be done before the pupil can be led to make these choices. What is it?

St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians of "the Word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe."¹ It is

The Will the
Objective Point

the Word of God in the mind
and heart that leads to right

action in the life. It is the teacher's work to plant the truth in the mind of the pupil. It is the pupil's work to act upon it and thereby transmute it into character. Yet while the teacher's work is to teach and the pupil's to act, a great deal depends upon the way in

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

which the truth is lodged in the pupil's mind, as to whether it shall influence his action. Much Sunday-school teaching is done upon the theory that all that is necessary is simply to point out the truth as it lies imbedded in the lesson, and thereupon the mind of the pupil will seize upon it, assimilate it and act upon it. This is a great mistake. We have been told again and again that "telling is not teaching." Nor is it sufficient simply to lodge an abstract truth in the memory of the pupil. It is a familiar fact that pupils may commit to memory hundreds of Bible verses without such verses having any very perceptible influence upon their lives. Not mere knowledge but action is the aim in Sunday-school teaching. How to reach the will of the pupil is the great problem. Not simply to lay the truth before the mind of the pupil, but to drive it home to his will should be the teacher's aim in the teaching of every lesson.

II

THE CAREER OF A LESSON TRUTH

“**I**N each of us when awake (and often when asleep),” says Prof. William James in his “Talks to Teachers,” “some kind of consciousness is always going on. There is a stream, a succession of states or waves or fields (or whatever you please to call them) of knowledge, of feeling, of desire, of deliberation, etc., that constantly pass and repass, and that constitute our inner life. . . . These concrete fields are always complex. They contain sensations of our bodies and of the objects around us, memories of past experiences and thoughts of distant things, feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, desires and aversions and other emotional conditions, together with determinations of the will, in every variety of permutation and combination. . . . In

The Stream of Consciousness

the successive mutations of our fields of consciousness, the process by which one dissolves into another is often very gradual, and all sorts of inner rearrangements of contents occur. Sometimes the focus remains but little changed while the margin alters rapidly. Sometimes the focus alters and the margin stays. Sometimes focus and margin change places. Sometimes, again, abrupt alterations of the whole field occur.”¹

Into this complex, flowing stream of consciousness, the teacher launches the lesson truth. What shall be its fate?

Immediate
Action

The ideal result of a skillfully taught lesson would be immediate action. On the great Day of Pentecost, when Peter concluded his sermon, the multitude cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” and “they that gladly received the word were baptized.”² When Saul on the way to Damascus saw a great light, and heard the voice of Jesus saying, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest,” he said, “What shall I do, Lord?”³

¹ Op. cit., p. 15 ff.

² Acts ii. 37, 41.

³ Acts xxii. 8, 10.

When Paul told the jailer of Philippi to "believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved," "he took them that same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God."¹

The difficulty is that, with so many lessons, there can be no immediate opportunity to put them into practice. Some

Action Post-
poned

time must elapse before the truth can be put into action.

In the meantime the truth drops out of consciousness. Even where there is a strong impulse to act, the impression dies away and the impulse is no longer felt. We are familiar with this experience in listening to a sermon. How often as we have listened, the eloquence and spiritual power of the preacher have so worked upon us that we have felt a strong resolve forming within us to go out from the church and forthwith begin to do something to make the world

¹ Acts xvi. 31, 33, 34.

better. But when the sermon is ended and the service is over, other thoughts quickly come into the mind, the impulse dies away, the great truth of the sermon drops out of the consciousness, and we go back to the old ways, apparently no farther along in the Christian life than we were before.

Since, then, in most cases, immediate action cannot or does not follow, what may we hope for? When the truth drops out of consciousness, will it fade away never to be recalled? Or will the pupil recall the lesson during the following week, or at some future time in his life? If so, how often will it be recalled? If any thought from the lesson does recur to him, under what circumstances will it be recalled? With how much vividness and power will it come? Will it enter his mind spontaneously and at the right moment? If it does, what will be its effect? These are interesting and important questions which every teacher must ask concerning the lesson taught. It would be an enlightening experience if it were possible for

the teacher to follow the career of a lesson truth in the mind of her pupil and find the answers to these questions. This of course she cannot hope to do. She can, however, study the mind of the pupil ; she can learn the laws which it follows in the hearing, assimilation and use of truth ; she can acquire skill in using those laws in her teaching, and with such knowledge and skill in teaching she may count on sure results in the life of her pupil, even though she may not follow and watch the effect of the truth. To aid the teacher in acquiring such knowledge and skill is the purpose of these chapters. Before taking up the study of the steps in teaching, the following considerations are offered as throwing some light on the questions above propounded.

Consciousness is impulsive. Every idea that comes into the mind tends to flow out into action. If ideas came singly and remained long enough they would always result in action of some sort. But consciousness is also complex. While we cannot tell

" Consciousness
is Motor "

just what the state of mind of the pupil may be when the lesson truth comes before it, we know some things in a general way which help us to study its effect. There is a certain amount of inertia in the mind as there is in material things, and there must be sufficient intensity in a given state of mind to overcome this inertia. Again there may be the strong pull of habit, the nervous energy generated by the thought tending to flow out along old channels worn by repeated action. There may be other ideas struggling to gain the focus of consciousness. The mind may be the battle-ground of ideas. The probability of the lesson truth coming into and holding the centre of consciousness for such a length of time and with such vividness and emotional intensity as to lead to action, will depend upon the number of faculties brought into play in its teaching, upon the interest or emotion awakened by its teaching, upon the manner in which it is associated with other thoughts in the mind, and upon the closeness of connection between the truth taught and the choice to be made.

Most Sunday-school teachers have a vague idea in their minds that the pupil will go out into the world and put into prompt action through the week the lesson taught to him on Sunday. They would be surprised if they knew how often the lesson goes out of his mind not to return for a long time to come.

The Week
Following

The lesson on Peter and Cornelius in the tenth chapter of Acts was taught in one Sunday-school recently. This chapter is full of great thoughts about God, His answers to prayer, His providential working, and His love for every one of His creatures. It is rich in material that might be used in daily life for guidance, inspiration and strength. A few days after the lesson was taught, a bright fourteen-year-old boy was asked: "Have you thought about the Sunday-school lesson this week?" "No," was the answer. "Do you remember whether any single thought or word that your teacher spoke to you last Sunday has come into your mind at

Illustration

any time during the past few days?" "No, I cannot remember that I have thought of a word of it since." This case is probably not an exception.

Let it be noted here that it is not a question of how much he can recall of the lesson upon review. In the review there is a mental effort made to recall the lesson, there is time for the memory to work, and he is assisted by the questions of the teacher. But to influence his choices, it must come into his mind without these aids.

Not a Question of
What He Remem-
bers on Review

Even though prompt action does not follow, or the pupil does not recall the lesson during the days immediately following, it may not be lost.

Renewing a Past
Impression

There grows up in the mind of the pupil a fund of knowledge and truth upon which he draws in forming his judgments and making his choices. The fundamental truths of religion after all are not many in number. It may be that he has learned them at his mother's knee. The lesson truth of any given Sunday may be one

with which he has long been familiar, and upon which he has acted so often that it has become thoroughly assimilated with his mental life. The lesson in such a case would simply refresh his memory and renew a past impression, and in a given situation, might influence his action, without his distinctly recalling that it was taught to him recently in the Sunday-school. Beyond doubt such is the effect of many lessons.

Again the truth taught, even though a new truth, may yet be so closely connected with the general fund of truth already acquired by him, that immediately and almost without mental effort, it blends with this general fund, and is thereafter not distinguished from it. Thus, for example, the pupil has in his mind a certain general conception of God. The lesson may give some new aspect of the character of God which would add just a little to the definiteness of his conception, and this would have its influence upon his daily life, without his clearly distinguishing between the truth taught last Sabbath, and the

Adding to His
General Fund of
Knowledge

general conception that is in his mind. It should be the constant effort of the teacher to connect the truth of the lesson with those previously taught so as to build up in the mind of the pupil a well arranged, closely connected fund of religious truth.

It is to be remembered also that memory is a very remarkable power. It is probable that no idea that has once entered the mind is ever entirely lost. While we know that the memory works largely by the association of ideas, we are unable to follow the intricacies of these mental associations. Ideas long buried sometimes flash into the mind, and we are unable to trace any connection between them and the thoughts previously there. New experiences recall former thoughts and feelings, and they come back with new freshness and power. Thoughts which seemed to have been long dead are suddenly revitalized and glow with new force and meaning in the light of new experience. Lessons taught in childhood may come back with convicting and regenerating power in manhood.

Memory

Yet after all this has been said and taking the most hopeful view of the matter possible, it is still true that the lesson may be so taught and the impression made may be so slight that it is swiftly swept to one side in the stream of consciousness, like a piece of driftwood, and it goes out of the mind never again to reappear in any way to influence the life. Thus the teacher's time may be wasted, and the precious lesson hour may become a lost opportunity.

In all that has just been said, regard has been had only to the unaided powers of the pupil's own mind. We must never forget that in our teaching we may have the assistance of a wiser and mightier teacher. "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you."¹ The teacher may have the help of the Holy Spirit both in the preparation and in

¹ John xiv. 26.

the teaching of the lesson. The teacher may have the help of the Holy Spirit to prepare the mind of the pupil to receive the truth. But the Holy Spirit will not violate the laws of the mind which God has impressed upon it. If the teacher, either through ignorance of those laws, or lack of preparation of the lesson, does not follow and obey them in teaching the truth, so that it does not really enter the mind of the pupil, she has no right to expect the Holy Spirit to aid her, nor has she any right to expect that He will follow the truth and use it in influencing the pupil's life. He may do this. The work of the Holy Spirit upon the human soul is indeed a deep mystery. Just when and where and how He may use God's word to influence the soul of the pupil we cannot know. But this is no excuse for lack of preparation and skill on the part of the teacher. Certainly He is more likely to use the truth that is well taught by a thoroughly prepared and trained teacher, than that which is taught by one who is unprepared.

III

THE CITADEL OF THE WILL

BUNYAN in his "Holy War" tells us that in the country of the "Universe" was a fair and delicate town and corporation called "Mansoul," a town for its building so curious, for its situation so commodious, for its privileges so advantageous that with reference to its original state there was not its equal under heaven. Its founder was Shaddai, who built it for his own delight. In the midst of the town was a famous and stately palace which Shaddai intended for himself. He had no intention of allowing strangers to intrude there. And the peculiarity of the place was that the walls of Mansoul could never be broken down or hurt unless the townsmen consented. Mansoul had five gates, which, in like manner, could only be forced if those within allowed it.

These were Eargate, Eyegate, Mouthgate, Nosegate, and Feelgate. Thus provided, Mansoul was at first all that its founder could desire. It had the most excellent laws in the world.

Thus under the figure of a walled city, Bunyan pictures the soul and its capture by Satan and its redemption by Christ. In studying the problem of how to reach the will

Ramparts of
the Mind

of the pupil, it will be helpful to use somewhat the same figure. In ancient times, many cities were defended by a series of walls one within the other. In the heart of such a city, there would be a central citadel, built of stone, with walls twenty or thirty feet thick, and sometimes when one after another of the walls was taken, still the citadel held out for years. So we may picture the mind as having a series of ramparts, the outer one being sensation, the second, memory, the third, imagination, the fourth, the feelings, the fifth, the reason, and at last in the centre of being, the will. These several powers are named in this order because of

the increasing difficulty in reaching and arousing them to action. The senses lie, as it were, on the outer surface of the mind. It is easy to arouse them to activity. Indeed it is only too easy, as every teacher, especially the teacher of the little children, has discovered. It is harder to awaken the memory, and it takes greater mental effort to use it than it does to use the senses. To get the imagination to work is still more difficult. It is largely through the memory and the imagination that the emotions are stirred. The reasoning powers are the last to develop, and are still more difficult to arouse. The will is the hardest of all to move. Thus it will be seen that there is real truth in the figure of the rampart within rampart, each of which the teacher must capture in order to reach the will. But when the sensations are captured, the memory stirred, the imagination quickened, the emotions aroused, and the reason convinced by the truth, then the will is likely to be swept into action. In other words, the greater the number of mental powers that are brought into use in the

learning of the lesson, the deeper, the more powerful, the more lasting the impression.

It will be noted that in the statement of the teacher's aim above given, the word "truth"

One Truth to a
Lesson

was used in the singular number. It must be evident from the foregoing that it is impossible to teach a large number of truths in a single lesson. Yet this is what a great many teachers try to do. They pass so quickly from one truth to another that not a single one of these mental powers is brought properly into play, much less all of them. The teacher who plans to bring all or as many of them as possible into action in the teaching of the lesson will find that usually not more than one truth can be used. To drive the truth home through sensation, memory, imagination, feeling and reason to the will is not an easy task. It takes careful study and planning. How to accomplish this will be the subject of our further study.

IV

FACTS AND TRUTHS

BEFORE we can find out how to lodge a Bible truth in the mind of the pupil, we must first distinguish between Bible facts and Bible truths. What is meant by a Bible fact? What is meant by a Bible

Distinguishing Be-
tween Facts and
Truths

truth? And what is the connection between them? It is to be feared that many Sunday-school teachers have very vague and confused ideas as to the answers to these questions. Yet they are of the utmost importance. Every Bible lesson contains certain facts, and it also contains certain truths. Can we study the truths without studying the facts? Many teachers seem to have this idea. In their eagerness to get at the truths of the lesson, they pass over the facts as of little importance. They treat the lesson as though the facts were the shell of which the truth is the kernel. "Let us crack the shell

and throw it aside as quickly as possible and let us get at the truth," is their thought.

But such is not the true idea of the relation between facts and truths of the lesson.

Relation of Facts
to Truths

Rather should we say that the fact is the body of which the truth is the soul. There is a vital connection between them. As we cannot see a disembodied spirit so we cannot see a truth until it is embodied in a fact. When we have once gained a conception of a living spirit through the body which it occupies, we can form an idea of what the spirit may be when disembodied; and when we have once gotten hold of a truth through seeing it embodied in a fact, we may form a conception of that truth apart from the fact. But we can never arrive at any truth entirely apart from facts of some sort. It is through the study of facts that we arrive at a knowledge of truth.

Just here is a source of weakness in Sunday-school teaching. The teacher not having learned how to discover the truth in the fact does not put forth any mental effort to

discover the truths of the lesson for herself, but depends upon the lesson helps to point them out to her. Thus she not only fails to understand the importance of the facts, but she loses the joy of discovery. She does not take the interest in the truth that she would have taken if she had found it for herself. She therefore lacks the power which this mental grasp of the truth, this interest in it, and this joy which its discovery would give to her if she had worked it out for herself. That the study of the facts is of the greatest importance in arriving at the truth will appear from what follows.

All the elements of our knowledge may be divided into two classes, individual notions and general notions. An individual notion is one of which we can form a mental image.

It may be derived from a single sensation or from a combination of sensations, or from a combination of present sensations and memories of past sensations, or by a combination of memories of past sensations. It may be

Discovering Lesson Truths

Individual Notions

simple or it may be very complex. But *it is always concrete*. I have a mental image of the desk at which I am writing, of the friend who is sitting by my side, of Abraham Lincoln, of Paul the apostle, of Mt. Hermon, of the City of Jerusalem, of the crucifixion of Christ. Material things, persons, incidents in the lives of persons, places, events in history—all things that can be presented to the mind through the senses or the imagination are individual notions.

A general notion on the other hand is one that includes a number of individual notions.

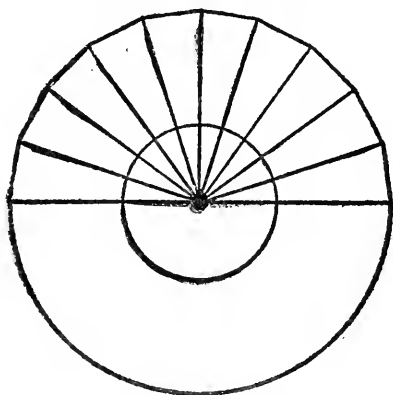
General Notions When a child sees a horse for the first time, he forms an individual notion of that animal.

After he has seen a number of horses, he discovers that they all resemble each other in certain particulars while at the same time they differ from one another in other particulars. So he forms a general notion of an animal that is not like any particular horse, and yet, vague though it may be, is enough like all horses to enable him to use the notion whenever he wishes to refer to them as a

class. This general notion is always abstract. It is impossible to form a vivid mental image of any general notion. Common nouns, verbs, and adjectives that include large numbers of individual cases, definitions, rules, laws, proverbs and maxims are general notions. Many Bible texts contain such general notions.

The following diagram may assist in making clear the relation between individual and general notions. In this diagram each one of the large triangles may represent an individual notion. That portion of the tri-

A Diagram



angle within the small circle may represent that element which is common to all the

individual notions, or the general notion. Thus each large triangle might stand for a single instance of God's answer to prayer. From the many instances of such answers given in the Bible and from similar instances in our lives, or in the lives of others whom we have known, we form the general notion (or draw the general inference) that God is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. The facts and circumstances connected with each one of these instances may be entirely different from any of the others. Nevertheless, in each group of facts, however widely they may differ in other respects, is found this common element, and because we find it present in so many different instances, we are justified in our faith that when we go to God with our needs and petitions He will hear us and answer us according to His infinite wisdom and love. The teacher who has not studied psychology or logic may find it somewhat difficult at first to grasp these ideas of individual and general notions. She should make a determined effort to do so for they are funda-

mental in all our thinking and to all our teaching.

In the Bible lesson the individual notions are the facts of the lesson, all those elements of which we can form mental images. A large number of them may be found in every lesson. It is to be remembered that most of the Bible narratives are very much abbreviated. A very short story may often be divided into a number of scenes, and a large number of mental images may be formed in picturing each one of these scenes.

In the story of the conversion of Saul, we may form a mental picture of Saul himself, of the oriental costume that he wore, of the horse on which he was riding, of the little group of companions who were with him, of the road along which they were riding, of the desert stretching away to the East, of the dim line of the hills to the west, and of the city of Damascus which he saw before him. We can form mental images of his state of mind, see the memories which were haunting

Illustration
from Acts

him of the death of Stephen, of the scenes of suffering and sorrow among the Christians whom he had arrested and dragged to prison ; we can feel in imagination the sharp stings of conscience, the dark shadows of doubt that hung over him ; we can form mental images of the great light that shone around him ; see him fall to the ground as though struck by lightning ; hear that voice as "the sound of many waters" saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" hear the trembling voice of the stricken man say, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and the Master's reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, but arise and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Yet all of this and more is comprised in four short verses of Scripture.¹

When we thus study the facts of Scripture, we discover that while there is a large element in them which belongs to a particular time and place, there is another element which is common to these facts and many others,

Lesson Truths

¹ Acts ix. 3-6.

which is found in the facts relating to other persons, times and places. As we study the conversion of Saul we discover an element common to the experience of a vast number of persons in all ages: It is that wonderful grace of God, who while Paul was a sinner met him, revealed Himself to him, forgave him his sins, and called him into a life of service which filled him with ever-increasing joy and gladness. Paul is but one of millions who have thus experienced this wonderful grace of God. It is this universal element in every Bible lesson that we are to seek for, but we find it only by a study of the facts.

So contrasting the facts and the truths of the lesson, we may say that the facts are those elements which are particular, local and temporal, while the truths are those elements which are general, universal and eternal. The facts belong to the particular time, place and person, the truths apply to all places, times and persons.

V

THE FIRST ADVANCE

IN picturing the mind as a series of ramparts, sensation was mentioned as the first or outer one. The capture of this rampart need not detain us long or be considered as a separate step in the teaching process for several reasons :

Memory

(1) It may be truly said that the gates through this rampart lie wide open and undefended. They are so easily taken, that they are often a hindrance rather than a help in teaching. (2) As the Bible lesson facts relate to events which happened long ago, in a far distant land, the senses cannot be used directly, but only indirectly in the illustration of the lesson. (3) In the actual process of teaching, ordinarily the first rampart to be attacked is the memory. Why this is so will appear from the following account of the process of acquiring new individual notions.

A little child who had a pet dog was taken into the country and saw a sheep for the first time. He cried out, "Oh, mama, see the funny dog."

How We Acquire
Individual Notions

The mother laughed at the mistake and told him that was not a dog but a sheep. What took place in that child's mind? A new object was presented to it. There was already in his mind a familiar image of his dog. He recalled this image, compared it with the new object presented to his senses, saw a resemblance between them, and named the new object a "dog." At the same time, he saw that the new object differed from the image in his mind, and so he called it "a funny dog." Then the mother told him the name of the new object, a sheep. So he acquired a new individual notion.

Thus all learning is a process of comparison between the old and the new. Not only so, but there must be some resemblance, connection or relation between the old and the new. The closer the kinship between them the easier is the new added to the old. The

Apperception

greater the difference between them, the more mental effort is required to compare them, and to form the notion of the new. The mind welcomes the familiar but shrinks from the strange and unfamiliar.

A new idea presented to the mind is like a person entering a room full of people. If he

is an entire stranger, he and

Illustration

every one else present feels a sense of embarrassment, and

he has a strong impulse to withdraw. If there is one person in the room who is acquainted with him, that person welcomes him. But if every one in the room knows him well, neither they nor he feel any embarrassment, he is gladly welcomed, and finds his place readily among them. So when the new idea comes into the mind, if there is a close relationship between it and other ideas in the mind, the new idea feels at home, as it were, and takes its place among its kindred. But if the ideas already there have no connection with the new idea, there is a feeling of strangeness, and it is either treated with indifference or is rejected altogether.

This is a simple illustration of the great law of the mind which psychologists call the law of apperception. We learn with what we know. Out of the immense number of mental impressions coming into the mind through the senses and the imagination, it selects only those which have some kinship with its previously acquired stock of ideas. To these it attends, from the others it turns away.

But not only does the reception of new ideas depend upon their connection with those already possessed. It also depends largely upon where those ideas are in the mind. If the old ideas are buried deep in the subconscious mind, time and effort to bring them into consciousness is necessary before the comparison can be made. If, however, the old ideas are actually in the consciousness at the time the new idea is presented, then the comparison is quickly and easily made.

Thus it will be seen that the contents of the pupil's consciousness at the beginning of

Where the Familiar
Ideas Should Be

the lesson must greatly influence its reception. If, for example, the pupil just before coming to class had been thinking on the subject of prayer, and had been debating whether or not he could really expect God to answer his prayers and were to come to the class with these thoughts in his mind, and the teacher were to begin to teach the lesson on the deliverance of Peter from prison,¹ and how wonderfully the prayers of the church were answered, the mind of the pupil would eagerly seize upon it. But if the pupil comes to the class with his consciousness filled with the experiences of the past week, the latest newspaper sensation, yesterday's ball game, the story book that he is reading, or a thousand and one other things that have no connection whatever with the lesson for the day, then there must be some preliminary preparation of his mind before he can receive the lesson. The ideas which are alien to it must be driven out ; facts, truths and experiences which do have

The Beginning of
the Lesson

¹ Acts xii. 3-19.

some relation to it must be recalled to his mind.

The first step in the teaching process is then to prepare the mind of the pupil by bringing into his consciousness ideas which are related to those contained in the lesson. In so doing the first advance is made upon the memory.

But how is the teacher to know what is in the mind of the pupil? Of course if the pu-

Knowledge of the
Pupil's Mind pil has studied the lesson before coming to the class, he

already has some ideas concerning it to which others are easily added.

But suppose, as is so often the case, he has not studied the lesson? Then the teacher in planning her approach must fall back upon her knowledge of the pupil and his mind. This she acquires by studying his home life, his school life, his recreations, his companions, his reading, etc. The more she knows about these the easier it will be to find the point of contact with his present knowledge.

Again the teacher knows what she has already taught her class. She should not

think that she is done with a lesson when she has taught it once. It is to be feared that many teachers dismiss the lessons from their minds almost as completely as the pupil often does. But the skillful teacher will keep a record of the lessons taught, and one of her first questions in planning her approach should be, Can I use any previous lesson to lead up to this one? If there is a close connection between the last lesson and this one, then a brief review is a fine preparation for the new one. But if as so often happens there is but little connection between them, then the teacher may go back over the lessons previously taught, until she finds one that is closely related to, or resembles in its facts or truths, the one for the day. For example, if the teacher had taught a year ago the incident of Hezekiah's prayer, in the twentieth chapter of 2 Kings, and the story for the day is that of the deliverance of Peter from prison, the teacher by recalling the lesson on Hezekiah would accomplish two desirable objects, she would refresh the mem-

ory of the pupil and lead up easily to the lesson for the day. Much more of such work in linking passages of Scripture together might be done by teachers, and thus the pupil's knowledge would be rendered more rational and systematic, and because of the associations thus formed, would be more easily recalled.

Jesus makes constant use in His teaching of the law that we are now considering. In

Illustration
The Samaritan
Woman

His conversation with the Samaritan woman, He takes the well of water with which she

was so familiar as the starting point for His great teaching on the water of life. The parable of the sower is based upon familiar scenes in the minds of His audience. It has been suggested that when Jesus spoke this parable on the shore of the Lake of Galilee, He could look over the heads of His audience and see a sower at his work on the hillside. His reference to the wind in the talk with Nicodemus, to the bread in the sixth chapter of John, to the light in the eighth chapter of John; the parables of the

lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, His constant reference to the kingdom of heaven—in fact all of His teaching is rooted in the familiar scenes, experiences and thoughts of the people to whom He spoke.

So the sermon in the second chapter of Acts is an admirable example of the use of this principle, beginning as it does with the familiar prophecy and leading up to the great truths concerning Jesus and the resurrection.

Illustration
Peter's Sermon,
Acts ii

The address of Paul in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia in the thirteenth chapter of Acts is another good example of the use of the law of apperception. Paul did not begin his address by telling about Jesus. His audience had probably never heard of Him, and if Paul had begun immediately to talk about Jesus, they would not have understood him, and perhaps would not have given him their attention. But most of these people were Jews and Paul began by recalling to their minds some of the facts of

Illustration
from Paul

their national history down to the time of David, and when he had reached that, he found the point of contact in the promise of God to David and declared to them "in this man's seed God hath brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." Then he tells the story of the crucifixion and the resurrection, and proclaims the remission of sins through Christ's name.

In planning the approach the teacher may use either facts or truths previously learned.

Using Either Facts
or Truths

In looking over former lessons resemblances may often be found between the facts of such lessons and those of the lesson for the day. Sometimes resemblances may not be apparent at first, but may be discovered when two or more lessons are placed along side of each other. A Bible class teacher began the study of the deliverance of Paul from the jail at Philippi by referring briefly to the prison experiences of Joseph, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Peter, and the different ways in which God had delivered them. At first thought there might not seem to be much

likeness between the experiences of the Syro-Phœnician woman, the widow of Nain, the nobleman of Capernaum, Jairus, and the father of the boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, but when they are brought side by side how deep and real are their resemblances! So the different ways in which God calls men might be shown by reference to Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah and Paul.

Sometimes striking contrasts may be noticed between the facts of former lessons and those of the lesson for the day. How different the experience of John the Baptist and that of Peter in prison; note the contrast between Matthew and the rich young nobleman; how different the experiences of Isaiah and Jeremiah, both prophets of the Lord; notice the differences in the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Cornelius; notice the striking contrasts between the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda in the fifth chapter of John, and the blind man in the ninth chapter of that Gospel.

Sometimes the teacher may recall illustrations previously used by her which contain

Former Illus-
trations

facts resembling or contrasting with those of the lesson.

Facts concerning the persecutions of Christians, remarkable answers to prayer, conversions, signal deliverances from danger, and other religious experiences that have come within the knowledge of the pupil or the teacher, may in some particulars contain resemblances or contrasts to the facts of the lesson. So the watchful teacher may often pick up incidents from newspapers and magazines in which there are facts which resemble those found in the Bible.

On the other hand the facts of the lesson may teach a truth which has been taught in

Truths Previously
Taught

previous lessons where the facts were entirely different.

Almost any great religious truth may be illustrated by a variety of human experiences. The teacher may begin the lesson by recalling a truth taught in a previous one, and then proceed to point out how the same truth is found in the facts of the lesson

for the day. Thus the familiar truth clothed with fresh concrete facts takes on a new and deeper meaning. The mind of the pupil delights in the discovery of a new aspect to an old, familiar truth. A truth which repeated many times in an abstract form would make but little impression, when thus illustrated by new and widely differing facts and experiences, is driven home deeper into the mind and life. It is one of the elements of good teaching thus to enforce the same truth by new and fresh concrete facts. And let it be repeated again that in thus pointing out resemblances and differences, the teacher is making use of the law of association by which knowledge is fixed in the memory, is exercising the reasoning powers of the pupil by assisting him to classify and arrange his knowledge, and is aiding him to build up an orderly system of truth. The teacher who keeps constantly running over in her mind the lessons previously taught for the purpose of comparison and distinction will soon become expert in detecting resemblances and differences which may thus be used in connecting the lessons.

VI

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IMAGINATION

HAVING carried the rampart of memory and prepared the mind of the pupil by recalling facts and truths with which he is familiar and which are related to those of the lesson, the teacher is now ready to advance upon and carry the next rampart which is the imagination. As it is from the lesson facts that we derive the lesson truths, the facts must be studied first, and it is in the teaching of the lesson facts that this attack must be made.

In describing an individual notion it was said that it is one of which a mental image can be formed and that it may be derived from (1) a single sensation, (2) a combination of sensations, (3) a combination of present sensations and memories of past sensations, or (4) a combination of memories of past sensations. As we have seen Bible

Why is the Imagination Necessary?

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facts relate to events which happened in far-away countries, a long time ago, and cannot be presented directly to the senses. But the mind has another most wonderful power by which it may form notions of such facts and that is the power of imagination. In forming notions of persons, places and events which have never been present to the senses, the imagination draws upon images of past sense impressions stored in the memory. With these in whole or in part, and with such aids as it may have given to it by descriptions and comparisons, it constructs a new mental image or picture which may in a greater or less degree resemble the actual place, person or event.

The use of the imagination is so much neglected in Sunday-school teaching that we deem it necessary here to quote from a few of our leading educators upon the subject. Dr. John Dewey says: "The mental image is the great instrument of instruction. What a child gets out of any subject presented to him is simply the

Its Importance
Dewey

images which he himself forms with regard to it. I believe that if nine-tenths of the energy at present directed towards making children learn certain things were spent in seeing to it that the child was forming proper images, the work of instruction would be indefinitely facilitated. I believe that much of the time and attention now given to the preparation and presentation of lessons might be more wisely and profitably expended in training a child's power of imagery and in seeing to it that he was continually forming definite, vivid and growing images of the various subjects with which he comes in contact in his experience." ¹

Patterson Du Bois in his fine book on "The Natural Way in Moral Training," says:

“Chief among these indirect
Patterson Du Bois modes of securing those right
habits of action and thought
which beget right feelings is the setting
before the mind a worthy image, a living
deed or picture. . . . Nothing is so per-
sistent in the memory as an image, nothing

¹ "My Pedagogic Creed," p. 14.

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so controls ideals. . . . The writer who lives writes in pictures. Many a dull speech or sermon is redeemed by one well told story or even a vivid rhetorical figure. Fable, parable and allegory, at their best, penetrate the deepest and stick the longest. That prince of educators, Francis W. Parker, said that attention was imaging. Words and phrase expressions are functioned only when they are followed by a mental image. There is no real teaching through dead forms of words which, because they call up no image, do not function."

Mr. Du Bois quotes Dr. George Stanley Hall as saying: "Again we tend to think in images, and some philosophers like Taine, Frosc-hammer and Parrish, have represented that this is the form of about all human thought. However this may be, the imagination is one of the most potent of all human faculties and is more creative than any other. Some high authorities have lately urged that if this faculty were well trained, all the rest would almost take care

George Stanley
Hall

of themselves. By the imagination we escape from the limits of time, space and even all personality that hedge us in ; our lives may be ever so limited and yet by this power we can almost become citizens of all time and spectators of all events. By it the poet, artist and prophet have wrought their magic in the world.”¹

Horace Bushnell declared that the Gospel
Horace Bushnell was a gift to the imagination.

Our Saviour in His teaching makes a constant appeal to the imagination. His parables are little pictures painted
Jesus' Use of the Imagination with a few touches, but with such a master hand that once seen, they are hung up in the memory never to be forgotten. We quote again from Mr. Du Bois : “ Nothing is more marked in the teaching of Jesus than its pictorial visibility. Sometimes it was acted, as in the miracles, the washing of the disciples’ feet, the ‘ show me a penny,’ the setting of the child in the midst, the blessing of little children, the cursing of the barren fig tree, etc. Some-

¹ Op. cit., pp. 179, 191, 219.

times it was given in vivid word picture or story as in the parables ; or in visual illustration as the smitten cheek, the stolen coat, the two women grinding at the mill, the widow's mite, the Good Samaritan, the last supper, etc. Wendt observes that 'the whole active work of Jesus was an exposition of His teaching through His own example.' He made it visible in His own life. Then He abounded in simile and metaphor and figurative illustrations by comparison ; in parables involving comparison utilizing common things ; in allegories. In fact the incarnation itself is, as it were, a divine announcement of this principle. Men needed to see the ideal man in the real ; they needed the image of the actual, of perfect manhood in the concrete, in order that they should themselves know God better."

One of the secrets of Christ's wonderful power as a teacher is just this skill in seizing and holding up before the mind some concrete fact or group of facts which can easily be grasped by the imagination and at the heart of which lies a great spiritual truth.

VII

GENERAL PREPARATION

AS individual notions or the lesson facts in Bible study are grasped by the imagination, and as we arrive at a knowledge of general truths through the study of individual facts, we see how abso-

The Teacher's
Imagination

lutely essential it is that the teacher should plan to attack and carry this rampart in the pupil's mind. But before the teacher can bring the facts vividly before the imagination of the pupil, she must have them vividly and distinctly before her own imagination. She cannot make the pupil see what she does not see herself.

Here is where many Sunday-school teachers fail. For this failure there are several causes: (1) Teachers have been taught that the important thing in the lesson is the lesson truth; (2) they have never made any

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attempt to cultivate their imaginations; (3) they have gotten into the habit of thinking in words rather than in pictures; (4) it takes considerable effort to get the lesson facts vividly before the imagination; (5) the lesson helps in constant use by teachers give little assistance in developing the facts concretely and vividly, but are largely taken up with critical notes, homiletical applications, etc. (6) Then, too, many teachers have not had the opportunity to study psychology, and to learn either of the importance of the imagination or how to cultivate it. In view of its great importance then, and of the facts just pointed out, we will be pardoned for giving considerable space to the study of this subject.

There are several elements that go to the making of a good imagination. There must be (1) a store of past mental impressions which may furnish the material for the new picture; (2) power to recall such past mental impressions; (3) power to recombine such

Elements of a Good
Imagination

memories into a new mental product ; (4) power, when such memories are thus recalled and recombined, to see the new picture vividly and distinctly ; and (5) power to do all this easily and rapidly. It will be well for the teacher to study her own imagination and see in which one, if any, of these elements it is weak.

It will usually be found that the principal cause for a poor imagination is the lack of sense material from which to draw. No mental image can be formed of anything which does not resemble something that has been presented to the senses. A blind man cannot imagine the colour of yellow. A child born and raised upon the great plains can form no vivid picture of a lofty mountain peak. The dweller in the tropics cannot imagine what ice is like. One who has been raised in a great city cannot form vivid pictures of country life, while he who has lived in the country finds it extremely difficult to realize the life of the dweller in the city. In reading poetry or fiction, we constantly draw

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upon familiar scenes of our own past life, and with these, often with but very slight change, we form the background of the various scenes depicted.

Even where there may be a fund of material upon which to draw, the imagination may be poor because of lack of practice in recalling past sense impressions. It may be said that ninety per cent. of imagination is memory. Immense numbers of sense impressions are made upon the mind through the senses that are never recalled. Seldom do we make deliberate effort to recall them. The varying experiences of our daily lives pass quickly into oblivion. It is hard to recall what we did or what happened to us last week, last month, last year. Most of us give little time to the effort to recall these experiences. Thus the memory becomes weak from lack of use.

A third cause of a poor imagination is a lack of power to visualize, that is, to see the image distinctly when recalled. In Prof. William James' larger work on "Psy-

chology " there is an account of an investigation which was conducted by Professor Galton as to the visualizing power of different persons. Professor Galton sent out to a large number of people a list of questions as follows :

Galton's
Investigations

Picture to yourself your breakfast table as it looked this morning. Now answer the following questions :

(1) Illumination. Is the image dim or fairly clear? Is its brightness comparable to the actual scene?

(2) Definition. Are all the objects pretty well defined at the same time, or is the place of sharpest definition at any one moment more contracted than the real scene?

(3) Colouring. Are the colours of the china, of the toast, bread crust, mustard, meat, parsley, or whatever may have been on the table quite distinct and natural?

Professor Galton found that many scientific men had no mental imagery whatever. In general society he found many men and a larger number of women and many boys and

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girls who declared that they habitually saw mental imagery and that it was perfectly distinct, full and clear. They could describe their imagery in minute detail.

Let the teacher try this experiment on herself and endeavour to discover how much visualizing power she possesses.

**The Teacher's
Visualizing Power**

No doubt upon such a test many will find that the power is weak. But this weakness may arise simply from lack of exercise as in the case of the scientific men referred to by Professor Galton. If this is so it may readily be regained and may be greatly strengthened and brought to a high degree of efficiency by practice. Let the teacher practice recalling the scenes of her childhood, the places she has visited, the persons she has met, the pictures she has seen. In doing this let her take time to permit the pictures to form, for they may come slowly at first. It is a good plan to look at a picture or a scene steadily for some moments and then close the eyes and try to see it in the mind. Then opening the eyes again the actual

picture may be compared with the mental picture, repeating this until the one is a vivid reproduction of the other. After a little practice the teacher will find the visualizing power growing stronger and working more rapidly.

The teacher may have a good memory and strong visualizing power, and yet may not be able to construct new

**Constructing New
Pictures**

mental pictures. This faculty too is developed by exercise.

The teacher in reading newspapers, magazines and books, should stop frequently, close the eyes, and strive to form a vivid picture of the scene and of the persons about whom she has just been reading. At first it will probably be found that these pictures are exceedingly vague and indistinct. Very few people take time in reading to form distinct pictures in the mind of the scenes about which they are reading. We are most of us content to skim from page to page, rapidly, without taking time to allow images to form, except in a most vague and indistinct manner. The truth is that very few

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people have "snap shot" imaginations. With most of us it takes a "time exposure" to allow the picture to form on the mental plate. If there were some way by which we could see these mental pictures as we can see imperfect photographic plates, we would be amazed to see how poor our snap shot pictures are.

Power to see these new pictures vividly as well as to use the imagination with ease and rapidity will come with practice and cultivation of this wonderful faculty of the mind.

Practice

As a rule children have strong memories and vivid imaginations. They think in pictures. Most Sunday-school teachers, no doubt, had vivid imaginations when they were young. But as they grow older the reasoning powers develop ; they form large numbers of general notions, and get into the habit of thinking in words, in abstract terms. Thus the imagination becomes weak simply from lack of exercise.

Where the proper use of the imagination has been neglected it will take considerable

mental effort to carry out the foregoing suggestions for its improvement, but the teacher who will give the time and energy necessary to cultivate the imagination in this manner, will be amply repaid by the increased enjoyment and delight which she will obtain from all her reading, as well as the new power it will give to her in teaching.

Pleasures of the
Imagination

VIII

SPECIAL PREPARATION

IN studying a portion of Bible history or biography, the teacher should read the lesson and its context and note carefully where the story begins and where it ends. The lesson verses printed in the lesson helps should be disregarded. They are determined largely by limitations of space, and therefore rarely show any regard for literary unity. The writers of these stories had a fine literary sense; they knew how to begin, how to work up to a climax, and how to end their stories. Even in single paragraphs and very short stories there is always displayed this sense of literary unity. A proper regard by the teacher for this unity will greatly aid in deepening the impression of the lesson upon the pupil.

Study the Complete
Incident

In each incident or story there will usually be found a number of changes of scene.

The teacher should note these
Scenes and make a list of them.

Sometimes the teacher may add scenes which are not mentioned in the story but which lead up to it, or which may occur between those mentioned. Thus the story of the restoring of sight to the blind man in the ninth chapter of John's Gospel might be divided as follows: Scene 1, The blind man in his home (not mentioned); (2) the blind beggar by the wayside (before the coming of Jesus); (3) the coming of Jesus; (4) the journey to the pool (his thoughts and feelings); (5) at the Pool of Siloam; (6) the journey from the pool ("came seeing"); (7) the return home (not mentioned); (8) the discovery of the neighbours; (9) the meeting with the Pharisees; (10) the meeting with Jesus. Let it be noted that each of these scenes covered a certain length of time in the life of the blind man, and include experiences which to him were of the deepest interest and of the utmost importance. Yet so con-

densed is the narrative that some of them are included in but a word or two. Think of how much is included in those four words "blind from his birth"; think of the joy of that return journey, "and came seeing." The teacher who would enter into this story must with the aid of her imagination fill in the details that are thus related so briefly. She must strive to put herself in the place of the blind man at each stage of the story, and must try to realize how he thought and felt as the story develops.

In order to get a proper perspective for a story, it will often be helpful to go back and study the scenes and events

Preceding Events which lead up to that with which the story begins. For

example in the study of the scene in the synagogue in the second chapter of Mark, the teacher might take up the life of the man with an unclean spirit before that day. It is very probable that when he was first seized with this strange affliction he was either driven from the community where he lived on account of the superstitious fears of those

about him, or else he may have himself felt constrained to hide from his fellows, and so gone out to live in caves or amid the tombs. Think of the misery, the suffering, the loneliness, the utter hopelessness and despair of one spending his life in this manner. Then think of the contrast between the day before he went into the synagogue, and the day after he met the Saviour. Such a brief study of the lives of the leading persons just before the lesson will throw light on their thoughts, feelings and acts in the passage for the lesson. Think of the life of Matthew the publican, just before Jesus met him; of Zaccheus; of the woman of Samaria; of Nicodemus; of the leper in the second chapter of Mark; of the rich young ruler; of the thief on the cross; of Saul on the way to Damascus. In order to enter fully into their thoughts, their feelings and their actions as related in the Scripture, it is necessary to go back of the point where they appear in the story and lead up to the first scene.

Every mental picture, like every real picture, must have a background. The teacher

must next try to form a vivid picture of this background. In order to do this, she must

accumulate a store of mental
The Background images of the lands and
 places where the events of

Bible history occurred. A visit to the Holy Land would be the best help for this, but as this is out of the question for most teachers, the next best thing is to study pictures of these places. Photographs of historic spots in Bible history are now to be had in abundance. The stereoscopic pictures taken with the double lens such as those furnished by Underwood and Underwood, New York, are especially realistic. The teacher should not be satisfied with a glance at such pictures, but should study them long and patiently, until they are transferred to her own memory. To these should be added descriptions of the scenes wherever the teacher can find them. Books like Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," George Adam Smith's "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," Thompson's "Land and the Book," Geikie's "Holy Land and the Bible," should not only

be read but carefully studied with constant effort to reproduce the scenes in the imagination. Relief maps are exceedingly helpful in giving proper ideas of the topography of Palestine. Models of oriental houses, and reproductions of oriental costumes should be studied, and books and poems which give a vivid sense of the atmosphere and surroundings of oriental life should be read.

The teacher who has never studied it can have no idea of how much more real and interesting Bible history becomes, when its background is studied and reproduced in the imagination. It adds wonderfully to the reality and interest of the scenes at Sinai to study them through pictures and descriptions. The teacher who follows step by step the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness and their experiences at Sinai as they are traced by Stanley in his "Sinai and Palestine" will ever after have a deeper understanding of the meaning and significance of that great story. So a careful study of the Lake of Galilee and its surroundings gives peculiar

Historic Spots

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vividness to the story of Jesus' Galilean ministry. One who has in his mind a picture of those two hoary mountains Ebal and Gerizim, with Jacob's Well lying between them at their eastern edge, will have a far better idea of the story of the woman at the well. It brings us closer to the great transfiguration scene to study old snow-capped Hermon and its place in the scenery of Palestine. The lives of Samson, Saul and David are better understood after a study of the Shephelah or low foot-hills lying between the central hill country and the Philistine plain.

The most interesting historic spot in the world is the city of Jerusalem. Many of the most important scenes in Bible history were located there.

The teacher should carefully study the modern city, its hills, valleys, streets, walls and buildings. From this it will be quite easy to work back to the city as it was in Bible times. While there is still much doubt as to the exact location of the place of the crucifixion, the garden of Gethsemane, etc., yet the main features re-

main the same, and the principal places of interest can be located with sufficient certainty to enable the teacher to picture them in imagination.

The teacher who will thus study pictures and descriptions of historic places in the Holy Land and practice recalling

A Picture Gallery them, will soon find that she is storing up in her own mind

a gallery of such pictures which are quickly recalled. Jerusalem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Hebron, Bethel, Samaria, the Jordan Valley, Jericho, Carmel, Gilboa, Tabor, the Lake of Galilee, the plain of Esdraelon, will be names which will quickly bring before her mind vivid pictures which will form the background of the lesson she is studying or teaching. So the Bible will become a new book to her. She will have a deepening sense of the truth and reality of these scenes, and there will grow up in her heart a love for the land second only to that which she feels for her own home land. It is truly wonderful that in the long sweep of the centuries and the many changes that have come over the face

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of the earth, so much of the original scenery, topography, social life, habits, costumes, and even the actual towns, on the same spots, should remain in this little country to-day.

If the scene is in a house, a mental picture of the house should be formed. A model of an oriental house will be of

House Scenes

great assistance here. A teacher, who desired to teach the lesson of the healing of the man with the palsy in the second chapter of Mark, took a small empty starch box, cut a hole in the top, covered it with light brown paper on which lines were drawn to indicate stones, and made a stairway out of pasteboard running up along side of the box, and with this an effective lesson was taught. Such a model could be used for a number of lessons. This was a model of a poorer class of houses. Models of the better class of houses with interior courtyard, the "chamber on the wall," etc., can be obtained at small cost. The room where the scene occurs, its walls, windows (if any), doors, furniture, all should be brought before the mind. Dwelling on these details helps to hold

the image before the mind and to develop its vividness. A careful reading of books like Stapfer's "Palestine in the Time of Christ," Trumbull's "Studies in Oriental Social Life," etc., will give the teacher correct ideas of how the people dressed, the way they lived, their manner of furnishing their houses, their social customs,—such as feasts, weddings, funerals,—their home life, their occupations, etc. As the life of the people in Palestine has changed but little through the centuries, books of travel in Palestine will help the teacher to accumulate mental images necessary for the construction of accurate pictures of life in that country in Bible times. Such knowledge is essential in order that the teacher may not make serious blunders in describing such scenes like that of the teacher who said she did not know how Peter could pray on the housetop without falling off, but "with God all things are possible!"

A number of scenes in the life of Christ and in the life of St. Paul occur in the Jewish synagogue. As a preparation for teaching these lessons the teacher should study the

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interior arrangements of these buildings. They were usually rectangular in shape with flat roofs supported by rows of pillars. At one end were the chief seats for the elders, the ark for the law, the reader's desk and the lamp. Some of them had benches for the worshippers; others were without these and the worshippers sat on the floor. There was a latticed gallery for the women. In studying a lesson like the scene in the synagogue at Capernaum in the second chapter of Mark, the teacher should endeavour to form a vivid picture of the interior of this synagogue as it looked during that dramatic incident.

Where a scene is located in the open air, it should be studied in the same way. Suppose it is the story of Jacob's vision at Bethel in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis that is to be studied. ↓ Jacob had bid farewell to Isaac and Rebecca and had gone out from Beersheba. With his wallet filled with food for the journey, his staff in his hand, and his garments gathered up in his girdle, he started

on his long journey towards the North. At sunset he stops to rest for the night. He is on a hilltop ; the stillness of the evening, the loneliness of the hills, the dark shadows of the valleys are around him ; he is footsore and weary and homesick ; he eats his lonely meal ; and gathering his garments about him with a stone for a pillow he lies down to sleep. The blue sky is over his head ; the stars are shining brightly through that clear Syrian air ; the soft breezes fan his cheeks ; the silence is broken only by the cry of some wild animal. As he closes his eyes, memories of his past life float before him : the evening scenes of the camp at Beersheba, the coming of the herds, the noise and clamour of watering the flocks ; the milking of the kine ; the evening meal, the talk and laughter, the songs and tales of the camp ; then the face of his old father, the face of his mother ; the scenes of his childhood, the religious teaching he had received ; the stories of his grandfather Abraham ; the covenant with God ; his sin ; then the future, its dangers, its uncertainties. Lonely, home-

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sick and afraid, he falls asleep. Then comes that beautiful dream, bringing with it a sense of the nearness of God. "Surely Jehovah is in this place and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place. This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven."

So wherever the scene may be laid, in the valley, on the hillside or mountain top, along the highway, by lake or seaside, in the open field, in house or synagogue, a determined effort should be made to bring it vividly before the mind.

Having thus studied the background, the persons in the scene must be studied. Pic-

The Persons	tures of oriental costumes may be studied until it becomes easy to picture the dress of
	the persons in the scene. The face is harder to imagine. The hair, the forehead, the look of the eyes, the expression of the mouth and chin, the tone of the voice, each gesture that the person makes while he is speaking, each act that he performs in the scene may all be brought before the mind. The greater the number of these details the longer the image

is held and the more vivid it becomes. The teacher may seek the aid of the great artists in forming such pictures. Michael-Angelo's Moses and David, Raphael's Paul, and other pictures, reproductions of which may now be had, can be used for this purpose.

The study of the dress, face, gestures, actions, etc., is not enough. More important than these it is to try to im-
Their Mental States agine the mental state of each person. We must not stop with the outside. We must try to pluck out the heart of his mystery, get inside of him, put ourselves in his place, and imagine his emotions as he speaks or acts, in the scene. Psychologists tell us that the "sense of reality" depends much upon the emotions. Things seen in the cold light of the intellect are apt to seem unreal, while things seen in a glow of emotion become intensely real. So there is nothing that will give the sense of reality to a mental picture of a person like that of entering into and sharing his feelings.

In forming a vivid picture of a person in the lesson it will often be helpful to run over

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in the mind the memories that person may have had at the moment related in the lesson. At any given moment of his life each individual is the sum of all his past experiences, he is what his past life has made him. These memories of his past life lie in his subconscious mind and may at any moment rush up into consciousness. They are especially apt to do so at the great turning points and crises in life. But even if they should not do so, it will help us to realize the person in the lesson if we put ourselves in his place, and run over his past life leading up to the scene in the lesson. In such a lesson as that in the eighth chapter of Judges for example, where the elders of Israel came to Samuel and demanded a king, try to put yourself in Samuel's place at that moment, and think of the memories that would come welling up within him as it dawned upon him what this demand would mean to him. The farewells of Moses, of Joshua, and of Samuel; the memories of David when he was anointed King of Israel after his long and trying ordeal

of discipline under the providential guidance of God ; Elijah's thoughts during that last walk with Elisha to the Jordan ; Jeremiah's memories at the fall of Jerusalem ; the memories of the aged Hebrews at the rebuilding of the temple ; Saul's memories when he found himself rejected of the Lord ; Paul's memories during those three days of blindness in Damascus ; Peter's memories during that night in prison when he expected to be led forth the next day to his death ; the disciples' memories on that last evening in the upper room in Jerusalem ; our Saviour's memories that awful night in the Garden of Gethsemane : By dwelling on these in imagination we find ourselves coming into closer sympathy and fellowship with these persons. All this is a part of that process of "putting yourself in his place," which is essential to the sympathetic understanding of another human soul.

It is not easy to form a vivid picture of a person in this broad sense. Personality is a very complex thing. Our conceptions of persons are formed from a large number of

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single impressions made under varying circumstances. But where there is a series of lessons about the same person, as often happens in the Sunday-school, the teacher who will take the time and have the patience to study him in the manner suggested, will find growing up in her mind a more and more vivid picture of him, and she will gain a deeper insight into the truths which are revealed in the life and experience of this person.

It may be objected that a greater knowledge of the Bible is here assumed on the part of the teacher than it is fair to expect from the average worker in the Sunday-school.

Knowledge of the
Bible Necessary

It is true that Sunday-school teaching does make large demands upon the teacher. No teacher who has any desire to succeed in this work will be satisfied with a scrappy study of each lesson as it comes from week to week. In taking up a series of lessons, the book from which they are taken should be read straight through from beginning to end. If this were done at a single sitting it would be

all the better. The teacher should read it through often enough to familiarize herself with its general outline and contents. If the teacher would read the Bible straight through in course a few times, it would help her very much in the teaching of the individual lessons.

Where there are a number of scenes in the story, it will not be possible to study them all in the manner suggested.

Selection Necessary The teacher may be compelled to select those which are more important, more dramatic and interesting, and spend her time on them. Even if it is not intended to dwell upon them all at length in the teaching of the lesson, it helps to give it unity and reality in the mind of the teacher to study each scene from beginning to end of the incident in this way.

In developing the scenes of the lesson it will be found helpful to make brief notes of the details as they come before the mind. If this is not done, the mind is apt to dwell upon one detail too long. When it is jotted down, it is easy to pass to the next. When all of

Notes

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the details are thus noted, the notes help to recall them, and by going over the notes a number of times, the several details become moulded into a unity with proper perspective and proportion. The notes need not be written out in full. It will be found usually that a single word or two will serve to recall the detail.

IX

PRESENTING THE LESSON FACTS

HAVING gotten the facts clearly and vividly before her own mind, the teacher is now ready for the next step, and must plan how best to bring them before the imagination of the pupil. This will be easier than it was to get the lesson into the teacher's own mind. Children have active and sympathetic imaginations. They are quick to seize upon suggestions given by the teacher. It will be found, too, that the more vividly the lesson appears to the teacher, the easier it will be for her to bring it to the pupil. It is easy to describe things which we see with glowing imagination. The teacher who vividly realizes the story herself will almost unconsciously add many little details which will give the sense of reality to what she talks about.

From Teacher
to Pupil

There are several ways in which the lesson facts may be brought before the imagination of the pupil. For the younger children the best method is to throw the lesson into the form of a story. Story telling is an art in itself, and it would require a separate volume to treat of it adequately. Making the story one's own, and then practice, are two essentials to success. Even in teaching older pupils the story method is often effective. Everybody loves a story, and there is no doubt of its teaching power. Another method is to ask questions which call for an effort of the imagination. There are three principal kinds of questions in Sunday-school teaching: those which require an answer from memory; those which call for an expression of judgment, and those which appeal to the imagination. Let the teacher note these three kinds, and let her practice framing questions which call for the use of the imagination on the part of the pupil. By a series of such questions she may set the mind of the pupil to work, and may draw from him the

Methods

picture which he sees, and in the effort to answer, the picture will come out in his mind more clearly. Or the teacher may ask the pupil to tell the story in his own words, interjecting questions which will help to develop it in his imagination. Or she may combine these methods, now telling the story herself, now giving a bit of description, now asking questions of the pupil, and now getting the pupil to describe it as he sees it. A teacher who studies the use and development of the imagination will become expert in detecting the vague and indefinite character of the pupil's mental images, and in adding just the needed touch to help him to see it more clearly. It will also be found that with practice the teacher acquires facility in selecting just the right words to describe the scene, or to give the air of reality to the lesson facts. The tendency at first will be to overload the lesson with details. The teacher will try to bring before the pupil all that she has worked out in her own imagination and pretty much in the same order that it has come to her. But with growing skill, she will learn to

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select the most important and interesting details, to arrange them in the most effective order, and to express them in the happiest manner.

In developing the lesson in the imagination of the pupil, diagrams can often be used to great advantage. There

Diagrams is more teaching power even in a crude diagram or drawing than most teachers realize. The rough lines and marks are quickly seized by the imagination of the pupil and translated into a picture. They give an impulse to the imaginative faculty, and enable it to work with greater ease and facility. A teacher who was teaching the story of Paul's arrest at Philippi ¹ drew upon the blackboard two lines representing the banks of a river ; alongside of them a rough plan of the city was drawn, with gates on the east, south, west and north ; a large square was drawn around the southern gate to indicate the market-place ; a small square on the side of this represented the prison ; a number of lines were drawn to

¹ Acts xvi. 11-40.

indicate streets, one street running east to the gate by the river. On this a small square represented the house of Lydia. Two or three upright marks at the crossing of two streets indicated the slave girl and her masters. As the lesson was taught, a chalk line was drawn from the house of Lydia down the street to the corner where the girl was encountered, from there to the market-place where the hearing before the magistrates was had ; and from there to the prison ; from there to the house of Lydia where the farewells were said to the church, and then to the western gate. It was frankly stated that the plan was imaginary, yet it covered the main features of the story, and brought them out with a distinctness that could not have been had without them. The advantage of such a diagram is that it does not require skill to draw, it does not take much time to make, and however roughly drawn it answers the purpose almost as well as a sketch carefully and skillfully drawn with all the details filled in.

Maps should be in constant use to trace

journeys and locate places. In using maps, however, it must be remembered that a map

is a mere symbol and that
 Maps it must be supplemented with
 word pictures or it will not help

much in understanding the lesson. Indeed unless it is so supplemented it may mislead rather than help the pupil. On the map the journey of Paul and Barnabas from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia¹ is indicated by a red line possibly half an inch long. Yet that journey led through a high mountain range, along a steep, toilsome and lonely road, infested with robbers and other dangers so great that they probably scared John Mark and caused him to turn back home. A look at the map would utterly fail to show the pupil what this journey meant. So the cities on the map are represented by small dots. These the teacher must translate into large cities, with strong walls and gates, with narrow, crooked streets, flat-roofed houses, public squares, and buildings, with swarms of people moving up and down, in and out of the stores and

¹ Acts xiii. 13-14.

bazaars, and filling the temples and theatres, people as real, as human, as those who walk the streets of our cities to-day. No wonder maps are uninteresting to pupils when they are merely glanced at and no attempt is made to translate the symbol into the reality. We have already pointed out the usefulness of the relief map in giving correct ideas as to the topography of a country.

We have also spoken of the help which pictures give to the imagination. They should be in constant use in the class. Many schools are putting in the stereoscopic pictures previously referred to. With two of the instruments and the pictures, they may be used very effectively in an ordinary sized class.

Models of oriental houses, of the synagogue and the temple, of articles of furniture, of an oriental tomb, etc., can now be obtained and are very helpful.

A very effective method of teaching a les-

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son is that of taking the class around a sand box, and having them make the relief map in the sand, then with the aid of the stereoscopic pictures, tracing the scenes of the story on the sand map.

X

WHAT IS INTEREST?

FOUR very powerful influences act upon the will and produce the larger number of our actions. These are (1) suggestion, that is the forming in the mind of a mental picture of the action to be performed ;
Influences (2) imitation, that is seeing either actually or in imagination some one else do the act ;
(3) habit ; and (4) emotion.

“The executive force of an idea,” says Jules Payot in his “Education of the Will,”
Payot “almost always comes from its union with those real sources of power which we call the affective states. Every turn of experience convinces us of the feebleness of ideas. . . . All force which instigates important actions emanates from sensibility. When sensibility is profoundly diminished, when there is no joy following sensation,

then the idea remains inert and cold. . . . The will is not fond of carrying out the cold orders it receives from the intelligence. As it is the organ of all power and feeling, it wants emotional orders tinged with passion. . . . All volition is preceded by a wave of emotion, an effective perception of the act to be accomplished. . . . It is necessary therefore if we would weld an idea solidly and indestructibly to a desired action, that we should fuse them together by the heat of an emotion.”¹

The power to feel is one of the most wonderful and mysterious that the human mind possesses. On the eastern side of the city of Jerusalem is a spring of water which is now called the “Virgin’s Pool.” A remarkable peculiarity of this spring is that its flow is intermittent. The water in the basin of the pool is sometimes so low that it seems as though the water had stopped flowing, but at certain hours of the day, the water suddenly begins to well up and comes with such

A Wonderful
Power

¹ Op. cit., p. 54 ff.

force and rapidity that the basin is soon filled to overflowing. This mysterious rise and fall of the water has been a source of wonder and awe to the natives for centuries. No one has ever been able to discover the cause of it. Many of the natives look upon it as supernatural.

The power to feel, to experience emotion, which the mind possesses may not inaptly be compared to the Virgin's
Rise and Fall Pool. Concealed within us and closely connected with the brain and nervous system, is this strange fountain which is continually rising and falling, and sometimes its movements are as mysterious as the rise and fall of the Virgin's Pool. At times it seems as though it had entirely disappeared. As we go about our daily tasks, performing them, perhaps, in a mechanical manner, it would be hard to discover even a trace of feeling in our minds. But some objects have the power to open the gate, as it were, of the fountain, and the moment such an object enters the mind, there is a swift rise of feeling. It may

be only a slight flow of the current, or it may come with a flood that sweeps everything before it, so that the whole mind is filled with it, and it rushes along the nerves to every part of the body.

When the rise of feeling is marked, it takes on many different phases : love, fear, anger, joy, sorrow, aversion, desire, longing, anxiety, pain, pleasure, etc. When it first begins to rise, or when the rise is not so marked as to take on any of these various forms, we give it the name of "interest." When the stream has risen to its height, it begins to recede, hence interest in any subject cannot be sustained, ordinarily, for any length of time, unless there is change and variety in the images presented to the mind.

What would life be without the emotions? Without the power to feel, we would be indifferent to everything. We would not think, for there must be some pleasure in thinking in order to overcome the natural inertia of the mind. We would not do any-

Interest

Life Without
Emotions

thing, for back of every volition there must be more or less interest. We would be indifferent to the world of nature, for we would have none of the higher æsthetic emotions. All the ties which bind us to our fellows would disappear, for they are all rooted in feeling. Nothing would be of any value to us, for consciousness of value takes its rise from feeling. A life so entirely negative and colourless would hardly be worth the living.

When our attention is first called to this power, it seems to be very capricious. It is capricious in its coming and going. A scene upon which we have looked many times, without a thought of anything beautiful about it, at an unexpected moment becomes transfigured with loveliness. A young man looks upon a young woman with indifference and then suddenly falls in love with her. The poem which I read with such delight yesterday to-day fails to move me; to-morrow I may read it again and it somehow will fit into my mood and take on new freshness and meaning. One day our mood is glad and

Caprice

joyous, the next we are depressed and gloomy, and we cannot give any reason for the change.

Objects which have power to awaken feeling often seem to be capricious also. What

Differing
Interests

interests one person fails to attract another. The child, the boy, the youth, the man, each has his own peculiar interests in life. The boy wonders at the interests of the man, the man smiles at the childish interests of the boy. Even those who are passing through the same stage of growth have interests different from one another. Children of the same family and near an age differ remarkably in their tastes and interests. In nothing do we differ from one another so much as in the response we make in feeling to different objects.

The power to feel is not, however, so capricious as these instances would make it appear. Each person is born with certain natural interests. These are added to in the growth of the mind and the experiences of life in a manner which will be

hereafter explained. It is not proposed to give here a technical exposition of the psychology of interest. This subject is still under investigation, and experts on the science of mind are not yet agreed in their conclusions concerning it. What we desire to do is to give the teacher some simple suggestions which will enable her to select the lesson material and to present it in a way that will interest the pupils.

XI

INTEREST IN LESSON FACTS

OBJECTS of interest always possess some familiarity. That which is entirely strange is not interesting. A new study is apt to be dry at the beginning. Usually strange people do not attract us at first. The Bible is an uninteresting book to many simply because of its unfamiliarity.

Familiarity

The places, persons and events belong to a far-away time and a far-off land. They seem to belong to another world and out of all connection with every-day life. So every teacher has felt the difficulty of beginning a lesson which is entirely unfamiliar to the pupils. Their blank looks and listless attitudes betray their lack of interest. Every teacher knows how much easier it is to teach pupils who come to the class with some knowledge of the lesson. Here is another

application of the law of apperception. The law of interest requires the preparation of the mind by recalling familiar facts and truths.

On the other hand some novelty is necessary to awaken interest. We are always
eager to learn something new
Novelty about familiar things. Curiosity, the craving for new knowledge and new experience, is a natural interest. We are born with it and never lose it. A pupil soon tires of a teacher who constantly repeats the same truths; who goes over the same ground in the same way; who never surprises. So the teacher must strive to bring something new and fresh to her class in each lesson. Old truths may be given fresh setting in new groups of lesson facts. The more thorough study the teacher gives to the lesson, the more likely she is to find something new in it. So the teacher must be ever seeking illustrations which show the truth in a different light.

Interest in an object depends very much on the vividness with which it is presented to the

mind. Objects of sense arouse interest quickly because of the vividness with which they are presented.

Vividness

In like manner interest in objects presented to the imagination will depend largely upon the vividness with which they appear to the mind. In reading a story laid in places that are familiar, we feel greater interest because of the ease and quickness with which we form mental pictures of the background of the tale. When we have seen a famous person, we will always be more interested in what we read about him, because of the picture of him that we carry in our minds. Another reason why a good illustration awakens interest is because it is usually concrete and brings a picture to the imagination. Stories that delight children, such as Robinson Crusoe, always have this quality of concreteness and vividness.

Personality is interesting to us. It is the one supremely interesting thing in the world. Let the teacher grasp the significance of this fact: That we are born with a natural,

deep-rooted interest in persons. Our first contact in life is with a person, in the loving embrace of our mother. Persons occupy a larger place in the child's mind than anything else. All through our experience in the world, our lives are pressed close against other lives ; they influence us in a thousand ways ; they dominate our thought, our feelings, our imaginations and our wills. It is the personal element in them that sends us to the newspaper, the magazine, the novel, the biography, the history, the poem and the drama. Even nature needs a human element added to it to make it interesting to us as John Burroughs has so well shown us.

We are naturally and instinctively interested in the actions of persons, especially where an action means something, where it involves the life and destiny of the person who acts. The delight of children in make believe play is well known. The love of grown people for dramatic action is so strong that thousands gather in our theatres every

Personality

Dramatic Action

night to watch the mimic play. Boys delight in stories of adventure that are full of movement. A baseball game is full of dramatic action. The mature man studies the great tragedies of Shakespeare in which the leading character is caught in the toils of his own deed and is carried down to ruin. Life about us is full of the dramatic. Comedies and tragedies are being enacted all about us if we only had eyes to see them.

Each one of the five elements of interest thus far considered is found in the greatest abundance in the Bible, and especially in the teachings of Jesus.

The Bible

Jesus makes constant use of the most *familiar* things in His teaching. "In the house we see the cup and the platter, the lamp and the candlestick ; we see the servants grinding the meal between the millstones, and then hiding the leaven in it till the whole is leavened ; we see the mother of the family sewing a piece of cloth on an old garment and the father straining the wine into the skin bottles ; we see at the door the hen gathering her

chickens under her wings and, in the streets, the children playing at marriages and funerals. Out in the fields we see the lilies in their stately beauty rivalling Solomon's, the crows picking up the seed behind the sower, and the birds in their nests among the branches; the doves and the sparrows, dogs and swine, the fig tree and the bramble bush. Looking up we see the cloud carried over the landscape by the south wind, the red sky of evening promising fair weather for the morrow and the lightning flashing from one end of the heavens to the other. We see the vineyard with its tower and winepress; the field adorned with the tender blade of spring or sprinkled with the reapers among the yellow grain in autumn, the sheep, too, yonder in their pastures, and the shepherd going before them seeking the lost one over hill and dale." ¹

On the other hand note the wonderful *freshness* of the teaching of Jesus. The people who flocked around Him had never heard great truths put in such new and surprising

¹ Stalker in "Imago Christi," p. 254.

ways. So fresh, so original, so unique are these parables and illustrations that they never grow old even to us who have heard them over and over again, centuries after they were first uttered.

The peculiar *vividness* of the Old Testament stories and the parables of Jesus form a large element in their charm for old and young.

The Hebrew language "had no words except for the concrete objects of the external world. All the words of the old Hebrew went back to things of sense, and in consequence even their every-day language was figurative in a way which we can hardly imagine. The verb *to be jealous* was a regular form of the word *to glow*; the noun *truth* was derived from the verb meaning *to prop*, *to build* or *to make firm*. The word for *self* was also the word for *bone*. *Anger* is expressed in Hebrew in a throng of ways, each picturesque, and each borrowed from physiological facts. Now the metaphor is taken from the rapid and animated breathing which accompanies the passion, now from heat or from boiling, now from the act of a noisy

breaking, now from shivering. *Discouragement* and *despair* are expressed by the melting of the heart, *fear* by the loosening of the reins. *Pride* is portrayed by the holding high of the head, with the figure straight and stiff. *Patience* is a long breathing, *impatience* short breathing, *desire* is thirst or paleness. *Pardon* is expressed by a throng of metaphors borrowed from the idea of covering, of hiding, of coating over the fault. In *Job* God sews up sins in a sack, seals it, then throws it behind Him; all to signify that He forgets them. Other more or less abstract ideas have found their symbol in the Semitic languages in a like manner. The idea of beauty is drawn from splendour, that of good from straightness, that of evil from swerving or the curved line, or from stench. *To create* is primitively to mould, *to decide* is to cut, *to think* is to speak.”¹

The great truths of the Bible are revealed in the lives and experiences of *persons*. “The Bible should be studied,” says Dr. Henry H. Snyder, in “Religious Education,” “accord-

¹ Gardiner, “The Bible as English Literature,” p. 113.

ing to the method with which religious truth is presented in it. This method is not theological, not philosophical, not the abstract methods of a text-book on ethics. It is true that it deals with the great themes out of which theologies, philosophies, and systems of ethics have grown—faith, God, righteousness, sin, conduct, character, the redemption of man,—themes world old and world long, and inevitably fundamental to the first man who began to think about himself, his place in the universe, his destiny, as they will be fundamental to the last man who, looking before and after, strives to solve the problem of his own narrow span as well as the problem of the larger life of the race. The Bible is frankly, directly and vitally a human book, and its method of expressing religious truth is as far from the abstract as the man that jostles you on the street is from Pope's 'Essay on Man.'

"It is this human, this personal quality, this embodying of the supreme truths of the religious life in men and women of varying types of character that makes a study of it, from this point of view, so fruitful of religious

value. What is the Bible, what is it that stands out from its pages, gripping thought, quickening conscience, and stirring religious sentiments? Is it the familiar truths that have been mentioned? Yes, to be sure; but they come by way of personalities,—of Moses, of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, of Samuel, of Saul, of David, of Peter, of Paul, of Jesus. Sympathetically to interpret the meaning of such lives, to discover and emphasize the forces that made them what they were, how they thought, what they did, to recognize the human power with which each wrought and also to recognize the power not himself which made for righteousness in the life of each—is to leave a deposit of religious values in the mind of the average student of far more significance than can be had from a text-book on ethics or morals. All this suggests that if the study of the Bible is to be of distinctly religious value, it must concern itself with the study of personalities possessed by religious ideals and controlled by the religious spirit.”¹

¹ Op. cit., Vol. V, p. 57.

Again the Bible is an intensely *dramatic* book. Its narratives are full of movement and thrilling action. Many of the incidents could with but little change be thrown into the dramatic form. The revelation it contains is a revelation of God in action, and in the great drama of redemption we are shown the way of salvation and God's love for mankind.

These five simple laws of interest : familiarity, novelty, vividness, personality, and dramatic action, will be of great practical assistance to the teacher in the preparation and selection of the lesson material. Keeping them constantly in mind, she will find many things in the lesson helps that are not available for her class. With growing skill she will learn to select those things which will not only attract and hold the attention, but which will feed and nurture the mind of the pupil.

We proceed now to consider certain other laws of interest which apply more especially to the presentation of the lesson.

All feeling is contagious. It is well known how rapidly fear will spread from one to another in an army. The effect which a cheerful or a gloomy person has upon those about him, the influence of an orator over his audience, the power of a great general to inspire his men in battle, and the rapid spread of emotion in great revivals are all illustrations of this law. The teacher who would awaken emotion in the minds of her pupils in the teaching of the lesson must feel it herself. To be thoroughly interested yourself is the first essential to interesting others. In relating a story, or using an illustration, the teacher who does not feel it cannot tell it.

If the experience through which a person in the lesson passed was such as to awaken emotion in him, and if we through the sympathetic imagination enter into his feelings, he becomes an interesting object to us. If we had been present in many Bible scenes, the profound emotions of those participating in them would have been communicated to us. But we can by an effort of the imagina-

tion thus put ourselves alongside of a Bible character and share his emotion. We may go further. We may put ourselves in his place and for the moment feel that we are passing through the experience and share in the feeling awakened by it. When the teacher has thus in imagination put herself in close touch with the persons in the lesson so as to feel their emotions, she may transfer them to the pupil. Just in proportion to the depth and force of the emotional appeal which the story makes to her, will she be able to bring it in power to his mind and heart.

In this law we see a reason why the teacher must get into close touch with Jesus. It is part of her work to pass on the thoughts, feelings, plans, and ideals of Jesus to her pupils. Not until she herself has thus gotten into close fellowship with Him, can she so hold Him before the class that He will make the impression that He ought to make upon the hearts of her pupils.

Fellowship
with Jesus

The law of the contagion of feeling applies

not only as between persons but as between objects and ideas presented to the mind.

When an idea brings with it a strong glow of interest, and another idea is then presented, the feeling will quickly spread from one to the other. When a lesson is approached with a good illustration, the interest aroused tends to continue on through the lesson. By interspersing such illustrations through the lesson, interest may thus be maintained even where the subject matter would otherwise be dry and difficult to teach.

So when a truth enters the mind in a warm glow of emotion, it is likely that when the truth is afterwards recalled, some of the original feeling accompanying it will also be awakened. If we can capture the emotions in teaching a lesson truth, we increase the probability of that truth influencing the future acts and choices of the pupil.

When emotion becomes associated with an object, it may become a permanent interest to the person. Each person, as we have seen, starts with a few natural or inherited

interests. Very early in life we begin to add to these through the association of new objects

and ideas with old objects and ideas possessing this power.

So we go on all through life acquiring new interests. Thus each person, through his own experience, comes to have his own peculiar interests. They are hidden away in the depths of his own mind, and he may not speak of them to others. The teacher in presenting the lesson facts or relating illustrations, may touch one of these secret springs and a quick glow of interest is the result which is communicated to the lesson, and it may be that all unconsciously to the teacher a bond is formed between the pupil's former experience and the new lesson which will have an influence upon his future life. It is evident that the more intimately the teacher is acquainted with the pupil, the easier it will be for her thus to touch the personal interests of the pupil.

Under proper conditions interest accompanies self-activity. One psychologist (Dewey) has declared his belief that "the

emotions are the reflex of actions." It is certainly true that there is a close connection between action and feeling.

Self-Activity This law is subject, however, to the following qualifications:

1. There must be ease in doing the task. The sense of effort is like friction in nature; it hinders and retards the action and if too great destroys the pleasure in it. Interest is not usually present at the beginning of a work. Not until the mind and body have gotten into full swing does the sense of effort disappear and pleasure and interest awaken. A recent book on "How to Study" has a chapter with the suggestive title "The Agony of Beginning."

The beginning of the lesson is therefore a critical moment. The teacher's problem is how to overcome the natural inertia of the mind, the friction, the sense of effort that is almost sure to be present at first. This is the point where she must be ready with the map, the diagram, the picture, the story or the illustration which will catch the attention and start the mind of the pupil to working.

2. There must be freedom in doing the work. We do not enjoy working under the control of others. We like to do things in our own way, to exercise our own powers of initiative and construction, and to use our own wits in the solving of problems and overcoming of difficulties.

3. There must be adaptation of the task to our powers. We do not take an interest in a task that is beyond our powers. Here is the secret of failure in the teaching of many lessons. Where the lessons are not graded, they are apt to be too difficult for the mind of the pupil to grasp. Making the attempt and finding it beyond him, attention and interest both relax, and his mind flies off to other things.

Subject to these qualifications, this law runs all through life. Watch a ten-year-old boy at his play and see how hard he will work at making a tent, or sand fort, or in building a dam, or in playing a game of ball.

Many Sunday-schools are introducing what are called "manual methods" of teaching. The boys and girls in the Junior Depart-

ment are put to work cutting out and pasting pictures, illustrating hymns, making and colouring maps, writing out the lesson story into note-books with lettering and sketches, etc. These all make their appeal to this law.

Manual
Methods

Interest is very marked in self-expression. Of course all self-activity is in a sense self-expression, but reference is now made to self-expression in language. We enjoy the story we tell ourselves. Every speaker knows the fascination of giving expression to his ideas and feelings before an audience. It is a frequent criticism of teachers that they talk too much. The very act of giving expression to what they have learned about the lesson awakens keen interest in them. The teacher should not try to teach too much but aim to give the pupil time to think and to express his thoughts. Even though she does not get through the lesson, or give out everything she has learned, far more will be learned by the pupil and he will take greater interest in it and remember it better, be-

Self-Expression

cause of the part he has taken in what is taught.

Two other phases of interest which are more difficult of application to lesson teaching may be mentioned here

Interest in
Ourselves

because of their influence upon our lives. We are each of us interested in our own persons and everything connected with them. We are interested in our clothes because of their association with ourselves. The reason that home is so dear to us is because of the many things there that have thus been associated with our experience. The old clock on the mantelpiece, the picture on the wall, the old armchair, the well, the path through the meadow, the little red schoolhouse, old school-books, and other books that have entered into our lives and become closely associated with our personalities : how dear do they become to us, and how deeply are memories of them engraven upon our hearts !

Especially are we interested in the play of our own inner life. Of that wonderful drama we never grow weary. In his fine essay on

"The Lantern Bearers," Robert Louis Stevenson tells of how when he was a boy in Scotland at certain seasons of the year, each of the boys would purchase a tin bull's-eye lantern. When the nights were black they would sally forth, each with a tin lantern buckled to his belt and over it a buttoned top-coat. "They smelled noisomely of blistered tin ; they never burned aright ; their use was naught, yet a boy with a tin lantern asked for nothing more. It was the essence of bliss to walk by yourself in the black night, the slide shut, the top-coat buttoned, not a ray escaping, a mere pillar in the dark ; and all the while deep down in the privacy of your fool's heart to know you had a bull's-eye at your belt and to exult and sing over the knowledge. . . . It has been said that a poet died young in the breast of the most stolid. It may be contended rather that this (somewhat minor) bard in almost every case survives, and is the spice of life to his possessor. Justice is not done to the unplumbed childishness of man's imagination. His life

The Drama of the
Inner Life

from without may seem but a rude mound of mud, there will be some golden chamber at the heart of it in which he dwells delighted ; and for as dark as his pathway seems to an observer, he will have some kind of a bull's-eye at his belt." ¹

By the contagion of her own feeling, by association between the facts to be presented and ideas naturally interesting to the pupil, or of peculiar interest to him, by enlisting his activity, by giving him the opportunity for and leading him to self-expression, the skillful teacher in the presentation of lesson facts will awaken a response in feeling and lead up to the capture of the rampart of the emotions.

¹ "Across the Plains," p. 213.

XII

INTEREST IN LESSON TRUTHS

THE laws of interest thus far considered relate more particularly to the lesson facts and illustrations.

We come now to the question as to what will make a lesson truth an object of interest to the pupil. It is well known that the search for truth may become an absorbing passion in the lives of men. We are now to try and discover why and when we may expect that a lesson truth will awaken interest in the pupil.

There is a large class of interests which spring from the desire to explain the unknown and the mysterious.

Speculative
Interest

“Speculative interest inquires into the relations and casual connections of phenomena. It is not satisfied with the simple play of variety, but seeks for the genesis and outcome of things. It traces

out similarities and sequences and detects law and unity in nature. In fact it leads to science or classified knowledge. Even a child may be eager to know how a squirrel climbs a tree, or cracks a nut ; where it stores its winter food ; and how its nest is built ; its manner of life in winter and summer ; why a mole can burrow underground ; how it is possible for a fish to breathe under water.”¹ So a great many things about the unknown, the unseen, the mysterious are revealed in the Bible. It contains the answers to life’s hardest questions, the explanation of its deepest mysteries. The teacher can make constant appeal to this law of interest in the presentation of lesson truths. The interest with which an adult class will discuss “foreordination,” “predestination,” and similar hard doctrines is an illustration of this law of interest. The ability of a child to ask questions which a learned scientist cannot answer is well known.

A lesson truth may be interesting because of its relation to our needs. All our needs are interesting to us, and there are times

¹ McMurry, “Elements of General Method,” p. 112.

when the interest becomes painful in its intensity. The truths of the Bible answer to our simplest and smallest as well as to our highest and deepest needs. They point out to us the way in which those needs may be met. When we are oppressed with a sense of our weakness, many Bible verses point us to the source of strength, and His willingness to give us help. When conscience is aroused and a sense of sin weighs upon our hearts, the Bible tells us of the way of salvation, and of how we may escape from the guilt and power of sin. When, facing the hard problems of life, we feel our ignorance, the Bible has much to tell us of wisdom and where it may be found.

In his study of the "Psychology of Religion," Prof. J. B. Pratt has a chapter on the "Value of God," in which he quotes largely from answers to a list of questions which he sent out to various persons on the subject of their religion. Commenting on these answers, he says: "People are chiefly inter-

ested not in what God is but in what He can do. Two-thirds of my respondents describe Him as 'Father,' 'Friend,' the 'ally of my ideals' and equivalent expressions. Professor Leuba seems to be right in the main when he says, 'God is used rather than understood.' The religious consciousness cares little who God is but wants to use Him for various ends. . . . It would be a mistake to suppose that the ends for which the religious consciousness wishes to use God are chiefly utilitarian ends, such as protector, meat purveyor, etc. . . . Most people want God for the same reason that they want friends. God's relation to them is exactly that of a very dear, a very lovable, a very sympathizing friend. . . . The God whom most people want and whom many people have is a very real and sympathizing friend. Like other friends He is to be sure not only an end in Himself, but a means to other ends. He can help one to many things that one wants. These things are as a rule not material benefits. They are chiefly of three kinds: Comfort in trouble, hope for the fu-

ture, and assistance in striving after righteousness." ¹

Our desires may or may not be the same as our needs, but they are always objects of interest to us. There are many things which each of us would like to possess, to be and to do. Children have many ardent desires. The teacher will recall many things about which her longings and day-dreams clustered as a child. Some of these were perhaps peculiar to her ; others were similar to the longings and desires of other children. A lesson truth which relates itself to our desires will at once become interesting.

Closely connected with our needs and our desires are our hopes which also possess deep interest to us. The lesson which relates itself to our hopes and gives us promise of their realization will at once take on a glow of interest. The hope of immortality in the Gospel is one of the causes of its appeal to men. When a dear friend is taken

¹ Op. cit., p. 263 ff.

from us, with what deep interest do we turn to those chapters of the Bible in which the immortal hope burns brightest.

When need, desire and hope crystallize into definite plans, purposes and ideals, then
a lesson truth which relates
Purpose itself to those plans, purposes and ideals becomes of great interest.

This form of interest has been called indirect interest. It is not an interest in the thing itself, but the interest
Indirect Interest arises because of the place a thing has in the accomplishment of a desire or purpose. But though only indirect it is a form of interest that has a powerful influence upon life. It is shown in the way pupils will work for a prize or reward, to win the head of the class, to make a good record, etc. All the various methods used in the Sunday-school to secure regular attendance and the like make their appeal to this form of interest. In business and daily life it is amazing to see the toil and drudgery that men will endure and the interest which

they will take in things in themselves ugly, painful and unattractive, because of their connection with the plans and purposes of life.

It is a part of the teacher's work to help the pupil to form high ideals and to lead him to form the purpose of giving his life to the service of Christ.

Ideals

When such ideals and purpose have once been formed, then the Bible will become a source of permanent interest to him. It is full of truths concerning life's highest ideal, the kingdom of God, and on every page it spurs us on to the work of attaining that ideal in our own lives, and bringing it to realization in the world.

XIII

INDUCTION

WE have seen that all knowledge consists of either individual notions or general notions. Individual notions we have identified with the facts of the Bible lesson ; the general notion is that element of the lesson which is common to a large number of individual notions, or groups of individual notions.

Notions, Individual
and General

General notions are the goal of all our study. They are so for many reasons: They are necessary to our thinking ; they are of great help to us in expressing thought ; they enable us to classify our knowledge and use it readily ; they furnish us with guides to action in the daily affairs of life ; and they are a great help in acquiring

Use of General
Notions

new knowledge. "Each concept (general notion) means a particular kind of thing, and as things seem once for all to have been created in kinds, a far more efficient handling of a given bit of experience begins as soon as we have classed the various parts of it. Once classed, a thing can be treated by the law of its class, and the advantages are endless. Both theoretically and practically this power of framing abstract concepts is one of the sublimest of our human prerogatives. We come back into the concrete from our journey into these abstractions with an increase both of vision and power."¹ These reasons apply to all classes of general notions. But in addition to these, the general truths of the Bible have an especial value in the development of character and in aiding the human soul to attain the chief purpose for which God has created it. In bringing to light the fundamental truths which lie imbedded in the lesson facts, and lodging them firmly in the mind of the pupil, the teacher is laying direct siege to his will, and giving him that which

¹ James, "A Pluralistic Universe," p. 217.

will be of the greatest assistance to him in the formation of his character.

Having gotten the lesson facts thoroughly in her mind, the teacher is ready to select the

lesson truth. We have al-
ready suggested that ordi-
narily one truth to the lesson

Selecting the
Lesson Truth

will be all that the teacher will have time to teach. In many of the lessons there will be a number of these truths that will stand out in the facts when the teacher has meditated upon them for a sufficient length of time, and when she has asked herself the question: What is there in this lesson that is just as true to-day as it was when these events took place? What is the general, universal, eternal element in this lesson? When a number of truths thus appear, the teacher will have to make a selection from among them, taking that one which is best suited to the needs of the class, and having reference to other truths taught in previous lessons.

When the lesson facts have been presented to the class, the next step is the summing of them up in a generalization. This may be

done in several ways. It is often a wise plan for the teacher to state the general truth

Presenting the Lesson Truth which she aims to teach at the commencement of the

lesson. This will help to keep her from wandering too far afield, and will tend to keep the main thought in mind all through the lesson. Whether the truth is thus actually stated or not, the teacher should have it clearly in mind so that she could if necessary state it at any time during the teaching of the lesson. Again it will often be wise to have the pupil state the lesson truth in his own words as it appears to him in the teaching. There is a pleasure in discovering for one's self the truth of the lesson and stating it to others of which the pupil ought not to be deprived. If the lesson is skillfully taught with some fundamental religious truth in view, the pupil will usually have no difficulty in stating it.

When the central truth is thus discovered and pointed out by the pupil or stated by the teacher, it should then be summed up and stated in some verse of Scripture. This

can almost always be done. The Bible is full of texts which thus sum up in a concise manner and in beautiful and sublime language the essential truths of religion. Sometimes it will be well to use a number of different verses all of which may express the same truth in slightly different words. This is the place for the Golden Text, if it suits the truth which the teacher has selected. Often, however, the teacher will not care to use the Golden Text, because it does not express the particular truth she wishes to bring out. This is the place for Bible drills on verses of Scripture which thus sum up the lesson teaching. These Bible verses should be frequently reviewed so that the pupil may in time acquire a large number of such texts, and so that they may be readily recalled in future lessons which may teach the same truths.

The method of study here advocated is what is called the inductive method: the study of facts and the drawing of inferences from those facts. It is the method which has led

to such wonderful discoveries in science and which has done so much for the progress of the world since it was first promulgated in its modern form by Lord Bacon. The very reverse of this method is in use in many Sunday-school classes where, instead of studying the facts to discover one truth, the teacher endeavours to see how many truths can be drawn from a single verse, or even a single clause of Scripture.

Induction

XIV

DEDUCTION

IN laying siege to the reason the teacher's task is not finished when she has lodged the lesson truth in his mind. The drawing of a general truth from a group of facts is only the first step in the reasoning process. When we have acquired knowledge of a general notion, we next proceed to reason from it back to individual cases again. When a teacher has taught a class a rule in arithmetic, she gives the pupils a number of examples to work out in order that they may learn how to apply the rule to new problems as they arise. So when the teacher of a Bible lesson has drawn out the lesson truth and presented it to the mind of the pupil, she may next proceed to show how the truth may be used in daily life. This process of reasoning from generals to particulars is called "Deduction." In Sunday-school teach-

ing it is usually called "making the application," or pointing the moral, or showing the practical lesson. The phrase "pointing the moral" applies more particularly to truths drawn from human conduct. From specific instances of right or wrong conduct we draw general truths which we apply to the pupil's conduct, by way of example or warning. It is to be feared that this kind of Sunday-school teaching has been very much overdone. Being impressed with the importance of right conduct on the part of the pupil, the teacher loses no opportunity to point out to the pupil the duties which he owes to God and his fellows. Thus facts and truths may be slurred over in haste to talk about the lesson duties.

There are dangers in thus "pointing the moral" against which the teacher must guard. One is that the pupil may plainly see the moral himself, and therefore he does not need to have it pointed out to him. When the moral is so plain as not to need stating, the pupil may rather resent such

Dangers of "Point-
ing the Moral "

statement by the teacher as being an insult to his intelligence. Even little children may see the bearing of a story upon their own conduct without always being told that the awful fate which overtook the bad little boy will surely be theirs if they are not good, or that they can win the lovely reward which the good little boy got, if they will only behave like him. Often when a good lesson has impressed its own moral its effect will only be weakened by the teacher stating it. Again a teacher who invariably draws the moral of the lesson will quite likely be guilty of tiresome repetition. The lines of conduct which the pupil should follow can only be pointed out in a general and vague way, and when we have been told with tiresome iteration that we ought to be good, that we ought to love father and mother, that we ought to be obedient to teacher, or we ought to do this or not do that, the injunctions are apt to lose their force, and to fall on unheeding ears at last.

On the other hand it would be a mistake to omit the application of the lesson alto-

gether. There are many injunctions to conduct in the Bible. In the Epistles of Paul, the statements of religious truths are always followed by injunctions to conduct. The connection between them is always close. It is in the glow of emotion aroused by the apprehension of a great truth that Paul passes on to urge the conduct which should follow the knowledge of the truth. But we do not find any tiresome repetitions of such injunctions to conduct. The proper time to point the moral and the time to omit it must be left to the wisdom and tact of the teacher. Her knowledge of the life and needs of the pupil will help her to judge what is best to do. Often she may speak a word of exhortation or of warning which may come just at the right time to be of great influence on the life of the pupil. The better she understands him and the closer the fellowship between them the easier will it be for her to know when to speak and when to keep silent. As a rule it may be said that the more skillfully the lesson is taught, and the deeper the im-

Not to be Omitted
Entirely

pression it makes, the less need there will be for making the application.

Especially should the teacher study **most** earnestly and prayerfully the question of when and how to point out to the pupil his duty to take the great step of public confession of faith in Christ. There are some teachers who believe that this should be done in every lesson. The wisdom of this must be seriously doubted. It is subject to the danger above pointed out of losing its effectiveness by frequent repetition. When the teacher is cautious and tactful in pointing the moral, and does not do it too frequently, it will come with all the greater power when she does take an opportunity which arises naturally out of the lesson to press home his duty upon him.

There is a way in which the teacher may make the application of the lesson which is not subject to the dangers above mentioned, and that is by giving concrete illustrations of how some person has used the truth and put it into life and action, and thus by

Concrete Illus-
trations

the power of imitation and example, rather than by direct exhortation, leading the pupil to form moral judgments and act upon them. This is what is meant by the saying, "Example is better than precept."

Let the teacher ponder well these wise words from one of our leading public school educators, Dr. Charles A. McMurphy, in "Elements of General Method": "The relations of persons to each other in society give rise to morals. How? The act of a person—as when a fireman rescues a child from a burning building—shows a disposition in the actor. We praise or condemn this disposition as the deed is good or bad. But each moral judgment given with honesty and feeling leaves the child stronger. . . . To study the conduct of persons as illustrating right actions is, in quality, the highest form of instruction. . . . Moral ideas spring out of experience with persons either in real life or in the books we read. Examples of moral action drawn from life are the only things that can give meaning to moral pre-

cepts. If we see a harsh man beating his horse, we get an ineffaceable impression of harshness. By reading the story of 'Black Beauty' we acquire a lifetime sympathy for animals. Moral ideas have always a concrete basis or origin. Some companion with whose feelings and actions you are in close personal contact, or some character from history or fiction by whose personality you have been strongly attracted, gives you your keenest impressions of moral qualities. To begin with abstract moral teaching or to put faith in it is to misunderstand children. In morals as in other forms of knowledge, children are overwhelmingly interested in personal and individual examples, things which have form, colour, action. The attempt to sum up the important truths of a subject and present them as abstractions to children is almost certain to be a failure pedagogically considered.

"A little reflection will show that we are only demanding object lessons in the field of moral education, extensive, systematic object lessons; choice experiences, and episodes

from human life, simple, clear, painted in natural colours as shown by our best history and literature. To appreciate virtues and vices, to sympathize with better impulses, we must travel beyond words and definitions till we come in contact with the personal deeds that first gave rise to them. The life of Martin Luther with its faults and merits honestly represented is a powerful moral tonic to the reader ; the autobiography of Franklin brings out a great variety of homely truths in the form of interesting episodes in his career ; Adam Bede and Romola impress us more powerfully and permanently than the best sermons, because the individual realism in them leads to unequalled vividness of moral judgment upon their acts. King Lear teaches us the folly of rash judgments with overwhelming force. Evangeline awakens our sympathies as no moralist ever dreamed of doing. Uncle Tom, in Mrs. Stowe's story, was a stronger preacher than Wendell Phillips. William Tell, in Schiller's play, kindles our love for heroic deeds into enthusiasm. The best myths, histories, biogra-

phies, novels and dramas are the richest sources of moral stimulus because they lead us into the immediate presence of those men and women whose deeds stir up our moral natures. In the presentations of the masters we are in the presence of moral ideas clothed in flesh and blood, real and yet idealized. Generosity is not a name, but the act of a person which wins our interest and favour. To get the impress of kindness we must see an act of kindness and feel the glow it produces. When Sir Philip Sidney, wounded on the battle-field and suffering with thirst, reached out his hand for a cup of water that was brought, his glance fell upon a dying soldier who viewed the cup with great desire ; Sidney handed him the water with the words, 'Thy necessity is greater than mine.' No one can refuse his approval for this act. After telling the story of the man who went down to Jericho and fell among thieves, and then of the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan who passed that way, Jesus put the question to His critic, 'Who was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?' And the answer

came with unwilling lips, 'He that showed mercy.' . . . On the other hand it is natural to condemn wrong deeds when presented clearly and objectively in the action of another. . . . When Columbus was thrown into chains instead of being rewarded, we condemn the Spaniards. In the same way the real world of persons about us, the acts of parents, companions and teachers, are powerful in giving good and bad tone to our sentiments, because as living object lessons their impress is directly and constantly upon us." ¹

As the teacher must give careful thought to the beginning of the lesson, so she must plan its close. She should search her own memory, the lesson helps, newspapers, magazines and books, to find the best possible concrete illustrations of the truth which she wishes to drive home. A good illustration may even turn a poorly taught lesson into a good one, and thus snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

Planning the Close
of a Lesson

¹ Op. cit., p. 28 ff.

XV

SPECIAL LESSONS

THE method of teaching outlined in this book applies more especially to lessons taken from the biographical and historical narratives of Scripture, from which the great majority of Sunday-school lessons are taken. But now and then a lesson is inserted in the series from the Psalms or the Epistles, which do not contain so large an element of fact, but which consist of general statements of truth or injunctions to conduct. Such lessons will call for a somewhat different treatment from that which has been outlined in the foregoing chapters. But even in teaching such lessons the teacher must not lose sight of the difficulty of teaching abstract or general truths, nor of the importance of linking such abstract truths with concrete facts which make their appeal to the imagination of the pupil.

In the teaching of a passage from one of Paul's Epistles, such as Romans xiii. 8-14

**A Lesson from
the Epistles**

which has been used a number of times in the International series as a Temperance Lesson, the teacher may find concrete material in the study of the life of a church in the city of Rome at the time this Epistle was written, and also in the life of Paul. She may form a mental picture of the Church at Rome ; of their place of meeting ; the different members, their occupations, their dress, and their special temptations and difficulties in leading a Christian life. With some study she will be able to produce a fairly accurate and complete picture of the life of a Roman citizen in the great city at this time. She can imagine the church holding a service at which the Epistle is first read. She can put herself in the place of one of those church-members and imagine the eagerness which she would feel when a letter from the Apostle was announced. She can imagine herself making a personal application of the many helpful things in the Epistle, and think of the ways

in which as a dweller in Rome, in the first century, she might put into practice the injunctions of the Apostle. Or she may try to put herself in the place of the Apostle at the time he wrote the letter, to picture his sitting down with his amanuensis to dictate the letter, his eager interest in the far distant church which he had never seen, but of which he had heard from a number of his intimate friends; and his anxiety to write something that would help them in their everyday life amid their heathen surroundings, and thus through the sympathetic imagination, she may put herself into the very spirit of the Epistle and catch something of its wonderful spiritual glow and fervour.

So in the study of such a Psalm as the twenty-third, or the thirty-second, or the fifty-

A Lesson from
the Psalms

first, the teacher may put herself back into the time and circumstances under which they were written, and put back of them the concrete personalities and concrete life and experience out of which they were written. Let the teacher realize that all literature is an

expression of life, that it is rooted in human experience ; that these writers first lived, and felt and suffered, and then, after their lives had been pressed perhaps for long years against these facts of human experience, they looked back upon them through the glow which memory and imagination give to the past, and they sat down to interpret these experiences and to give expression to the feelings stirred in their hearts by them and thus they revealed in beautiful and sublime language the thought and feelings arising from their experience. The person and the life must therefore be put back of the Psalm or Poem, before we can enter into full sympathy with it, and understand its meaning, and grasp its message. What a wonderful piece of writing the Twenty-third Psalm becomes when studied in the light of David's experience as a shepherd, and of his subsequent life under the providential guardianship of God.

XVI

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD

THIS is not a treatise on religion or theology. It is a book on how to teach and not on what to teach.

Yet in view of the aim set forth in the first chapter, and of the insistence all through this book upon the Citadel of the Will as being the objective point of all Sunday-school teaching, it seems fitting that something should here be said as to the truths which will have the greatest and most direct influence upon the will of the pupil.

The truths which are found in the Bible may be divided into two classes: (1) those

Two Classes
of Truths

which have to do with our relations to one another, and (2) those which have to do with

God. The Bible is a very human book. The stories and incidents related of its many characters are told with such simplicity,

vividness, unconscious art, and truth to nature, that as a text-book for the study of human life it has no equal. But this is not the main purpose of the Bible. Its chief purpose is to give to us a revelation of God. It is "God's Word," the expression of His character, plan and purpose in the world. Therefore the teacher will best use the Bible in accordance with its own purpose, if she seeks to find in it the truth concerning God. It is not meant here that the teacher is to put into the lesson something that it does not clearly and logically teach. Only such inferences should be drawn as arise fairly out of the facts. But whenever the facts of the lesson will permit her to do so, the teacher should seek to make God's personality, His character and His will clear and vivid, showing God at work in and through the characters and incidents, selecting those facts which reveal God best, and seeing to it that no Bible character is held up before the pupil to the exclusion of God, but that each person is shown with reference to the relationship which he occupies to Him. Every actor in the lesson should be

subordinate to the chief character in the drama of redemption. Thus the teacher will seek to bring the mind, heart and will of the pupil into vital contact with the mind, heart and will of God, so that the revelation of God in the Bible shall make its fullest and deepest impression upon him ; so that his conception of God shall be constantly growing in depth, richness and power ; and so that he may be one of those of whom Paul speaks in the third chapter of Second Corinthians when he says: " But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord the Spirit."

Here again let the teacher note that the most powerful influences upon her own life have been those emanating from persons, not truths about persons, but vivid mental pictures of such persons, and rich mental conceptions of their characters. Influence might almost be defined to be " the motor response to an imaged personality." The writer well remembers the time when he first left home

Influence of
Personality

to live in a distant city, and how when he was tempted to go to doubtful places of amusement, the face of his mother would rise before him, and it seemed as though he could hear her voice speaking to him in gentle reproof and warning. The memory of that face and of that voice barred the way to sin many a time in his life. So the strongest possible influence upon the pupil's actions and character will be a vivid realization of God as a person, with a rich and true conception of His character.

It is evident that such an aim and purpose as this must have much influence on the teacher's selection of lesson facts. Some teachers seem to have a prejudice against teaching facts. They feel that it is a waste of time, for example, to talk about the distance from Dan to Beersheba, or the height of Mount Hermon, or how many times the number seven is used in the Bible, etc. There is a large amount of Bible lore that is curious and which may be very interesting to minds having a love for facts, but a

Facts Which
Reveal God

knowledge of which does not help much in spiritual insight or growth. It is hoped that the preceding chapters have made it clear that it is not the study of such facts as these that is advocated in this book. The important facts are those which reveal God at work in the world and which by their appeal to heart and imagination make His character and purpose real and concrete to the pupil.

We are to strive then as teachers to make the thought of God one of those which lie

Cultivating the
Pupil's Conscious-
ness of God

near the surface of the pupil's mind, which will spring into the centre of his consciousness frequently, and which will even work upon his subconscious mind in a way to influence his actions. We wish to make the thought of God one which will be present not only at rare intervals, as when he says his prayers, or when he feels the sting of conscience, or when he is in trouble, but so near to him and so frequently recalled, that God will become in thought as He is in reality, an ever-present Saviour, helper and friend, sharing in his innermost life, sympathizing with him in his

sorrow, grieving over his sins and failures, and rejoicing with him in his happiness.

We are reminded again that it is the law of association which governs the passage of ideas from the subconscious to the conscious mind. Those ideas which lie nearest to the surface of the subconscious mind are those which have been most frequently in the mind, which come out most plainly in the centre of consciousness, and which thereby form the largest number of associations. Hence the oftener the thought of God is brought into the consciousness of the pupil, the more real the teacher can make him appear to the pupil, and the closer she can help him to knit up the thought of God with his daily life, the better will she succeed in making that thought the dominating influence on his life.

Let the teacher recall the growth of the consciousness of God in her own mind. As she has studied His Word and given herself to His service, she has found Him coming as it were from the margin to the centre of her

Association

Growth of the Con-
sciousness of God

consciousness. He is no longer one among many persons, He has become the chief person ; He is no longer one with whom she occupies a vague, far-off relationship ; He is one with whom she has come into the closest and most intimate companionship ; He is no longer one who, on rare occasions, comes to mind, but rather is He seldom absent from it, so that even when she is busy about other matters, the thought of Him is so near that it may at any moment flash into her consciousness.

A certain small boy known to the writer is unusually fond of his mother. If you should

see him at play, you would

An Illustration

think that his mind was entirely fixed upon the toy he is

using or the companion with whom he is playing. But watch him for a little while, and you will see him drop his toy ; there is a patter of feet up the steps and along the hallway ; there is a call to mother, and when she is found, he puts his arm around her neck, and says, " I just came in to give you a hug." From his earliest years, the one dominant

fact of that boy's consciousness has been the presence, love and care of his mother. So she is hardly ever absent from his thought, and when he is busiest, the thought of her is so near the surface, that at the most unexpected moments it flashes into the centre of his consciousness, and he must go and hug her. This occurs many times a day. So if we could only get the thought of God into the minds of our pupils to that extent, what would it not mean in help and comfort, in power and joy in their lives !

When God thus becomes enthroned in the inner life, His will becomes the dominating influence upon that life.

Obedience

When we think of Him often, we are afraid to disobey Him. It is because we forget Him, and allow other thoughts to come in and take possession of our minds, that we sin against Him so often.

Again when God is enthroned in consciousness, love for Him will grow deep and strong. It is another law of our minds that we learn to love those things and persons

that are oftenest present there. We have already referred to our love of home. It is because the objects there are brought before our minds so often that we learn to love even the inanimate things because of their intimate association with our lives. How much more true this is of the persons in the home. The strong and tender ties which bind husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, together show how natural it is for us to love those with whom we are closely associated, and since God is so worthy to be loved, and since His care, His kindness and His love are so much greater than those of any earthly friend, we can be sure that if the thought of Him is often present in the minds of our pupils, they will learn to love Him.

The thought of God was the dominating influence in the life and teachings of Christ.

At the age of twelve, His first recorded utterance shows Him in conscious, loving and obedient relationship to God, "Wist ye not I must be about My Father's business?" The

Christ's Conscious-
ness of God

Gospel of John might almost be said to be a study of the consciousness of Jesus, and shows that the thought of God was never absent from his mind. He and the Father are one, and seventy times in those few chapters does the thought of God come out in His speech. He loved to talk about Him; He talked of hardly anything else. "This is life eternal that men should know Thee, the only living and true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." For this He came down from heaven; for this He lived and taught; for this He died on the cross; for this He arose from the dead; for this He lives and rules: to bring the human race into conscious, loving and obedient relationship to God; for this He will continue to reign until the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, until the end shall come when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all.

So it is in Jesus Christ that we have the full revelation of God. It is by looking into His face, studying His life, following in

His footsteps, and giving our lives to His service, that we come into closest fellowship with God. And so it is the

Jesus Christ the
Revelation of God

aim of the Sunday-school as stated in the first chapter :

“To bring the pupil to Christ, to build him up in Christ, and to send him forth to work for Christ.”



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